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ABSTRACT

The case studies summarized in this report are based on ethnographic surveys carried out mainly in Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Ivory Coast, and Senegal (collectively called "Tropical Africa" in the text). The surveys were also carried out in the Maghreb countries, especially Algeria and southern India. Their common objective was to study the methods of socialization and the transmission of knowledge in each of these cultural regions. Efforts were focused on highlighting "traditional" educational concepts and practices in the context of family groups, in which the relationships between parents and children can be readily observed and understood. As noted by the investigators, the societies examined are organized on the basis of lineage or caste, and polygamy is practiced in the three regions. Thus, the word "family" is not seen as referring so much to a restricted environment characterized by an intense relationship between parents and children as to an infinitely wide-ranging social environment (an extended family, more properly termed a "domestic unit"). In this context, it is argued that education must be construed in its broadest sense, involving a variety of forms depending on the sociocultural environment in which it emerges. Specifically, the content of education is perceived as being the ideals, knowledge, and know-how focused on the child.

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Division of Structures, Content, Methods and Techniques of Education

THE ROLE OF PARENTS IN THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN
OF PRE-SCHOOL AGE IN TROPICAL AFRICA,
INDIA AND THE MAGHREB COUNTRIES

prepared by

THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION FOR PARENT EDUCATION
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FOREWORD

There is no longer any need today to demonstrate the importance of the first years of life nor does it appear necessary to justify the interest aroused in the education of young children, which may be observed at all levels of the collective consciousness. We owe this evolution in thinking to the development of the psychological science, and in particular of psycho-analysis which, although comparatively more recent, has now become almost as widely popularized as most of the human sciences.

However, educational activity as practised in all the regions of the world is not necessarily based on data recognized as scientific in the West but often unknown to people belonging to non-Western civilizations. The upbringing of children is usually based on collective experience, that is to say established custom. In a more remote context, it is comparable to the rearing of the young in the animal kingdom. But it will be seen that education differs from the mere rearing of animals as regards the protagonists involved (the children and the adults), the means restricted to (word and gesture) and the time span covered (a feeling for the future, for example, and reference to the past).

Above all every system of education is the expression of a culture before it becomes the subject of specific analysis: beyond the biological data that make up the human child, we know how much he is the product of his environment, as regards his motor, psycho-motor, cognitive, social and emotional development. This is why in the scientific study of childhood, the young child must be considered in the variety of cultural environments by which he is always surrounded. Is the fact that children in Africa are carried longer than elsewhere the cause of their psycho-motor precocity? Does the quality of their natural and social environment have such a direct effect on the development of their verbal or manipulatory abilities? Some queries thus remain and this probably justifies respective approaches taken in isolation by the experimental psychologist, the educator and the anthropologist.

The case studies summarized below are based on ethnographical surveys carried out mainly in Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Ivory Coast and Senegal; for convenience of expression, this group of countries has been called Tropical Africa in the text. The surveys were also carried out in the Maghreb countries, especially Algeria, and in southern India. Their common objective was to study the methods of socialization and of the transmission of knowledge in each of the cultural areas considered. Efforts were focused on highlighting "traditional" educational concepts and practices in the context of family groups in which the role of parents towards their children can be observed and understood. Yet the implementation of this project did not fail to bring up certain difficulties: first of all, what is usually described as traditional in the extra-European world does not have the stability or the immutability commonly ascribed to it: all societies produce and are subject to their own dynamic forces which are at the origin of the development of the scales of values and standards of behaviour which characterize each society. For this reason so-called traditional societies also generate forces of change which mark the course of their own history. Secondly, the considerable expansion of Western civilization has affected certain habits and customs typical of these societies. Finally, the latter as a whole are characterized by an ethnic heterogeneity which often conceals, in each one of them and at first sight, a community of cultural features shared by different groups. These difficulties inherent in the fields covered by the inquiry made it difficult to establish a comprehensive methodology, and it will therefore be understood why these cases are put forward in isolation one from the other, in accordance with a general plan which itself is very flexible. However, an overall synthesis will be attempted in the last part of this study, singling out, from the three cases involved, the general principles of education and the teaching techniques together with their implications for the process of development and training of the young child.

The authors⁽¹⁾ have confined themselves to putting forward their comments and to making a more or less thorough analysis of them, according to the degree of differentiation of the educational sector as such. They have refrained from making any proposals to introduce modifications, even considered as positive, of the practices which they have observed. In this respect, they consider that such action, which should normally form part of a more general development effort, should be taken by the populations concerned, in other words that it should be of an endogenous nature.

(1) C. Béhar-Pauze, M. Bekombo, M. Bertrand and P. Boyer are working, in different capacities, at the Laboratoire d'ethnologie et de sociologie comparative of the University of Paris X and the CNRS.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The "pre-school age" covers roughly the first six or seven years of a child's life. Dividing up a life span in this way is bound to be an arbitrary exercise and denotes an average derived from the general requirements as to the age for starting school. It would have been possible to speak of childhood, but that term is known to have many connotations and is associated with widely differing scales of values.

Whatever the standpoint adopted, this study takes as its subject children as viewed from the time of birth to the age of 6 to 7 years. The aim, therefore, is to follow and observe them over a period when they are closely and almost exclusively looked after by the family, which is the only social group they have an opportunity of exploring and within which they engage in their first experiments in human relations.

However, the family does not, in itself, represent an environment and a community functioning independently of society at large. It forms, rather, a segment of that society. Although it is the most limited in terms of size, it is still able to bring out all the cultural features representative of that society. It is the place both where myths are recounted and where the institutions regulating society as a whole and the values on which those institutions are based are recalled to the collective and individual consciousness.

In this context, education can only be construed in its broadest sense, inasmuch as it is the expression of anonymous or personal action aimed at making new-born children members of the society into which they are born and of the strategies laid down to strengthen and develop their physical and mental faculties. It involves training of the body and the mind, and accordingly it embraces both socialization and learning. This action takes a variety of forms, depending on the socio-cultural environment in which it emerges, and its content is made up of the ideals, the knowledge and the know-how which are focused on the child.

1. KINSHIP AND ALLIANCE IN TROPICAL AFRICA, INDIA AND THE MAGHREB

The societies examined in this study are organized on the basis of lineage or caste. While castes can be likened to social classes, lineage in reality expresses a pattern of social organization typical of societies in Tropical Africa and the Maghreb. Roughly speaking, these societies are formed of elements that are grouped together on four, six or eight interlocking levels. The lineage unit embraces two or three of these levels and is accordingly composed of people who can lay claim to a common ancestor and who are therefore linked by kinship ties that are strong enough to warrant the prohibition of marriage within the same unit.

The distribution of individuals in the lineages is determined by the prevailing system of descent, which follows the maternal line in some cases and the paternal line in others. In this regard, it should be recalled that all individuals belong to their particular lineage once and for all and that they maintain all the rights and obligations of that lineage throughout their lives, no matter what events may come to pass. This prompts us to consider rules of residence, whereby married women go and live at the husband's home or, conversely, are visited daily by the husband. These observations are particularly relevant to Tropical Africa and the Maghreb. From the point of view of the marriage alliance, they imply that the units forming the alliance consist primarily of the lineages rather than of the individuals - the man and the woman - representing them in the couple formed by the two spouses.

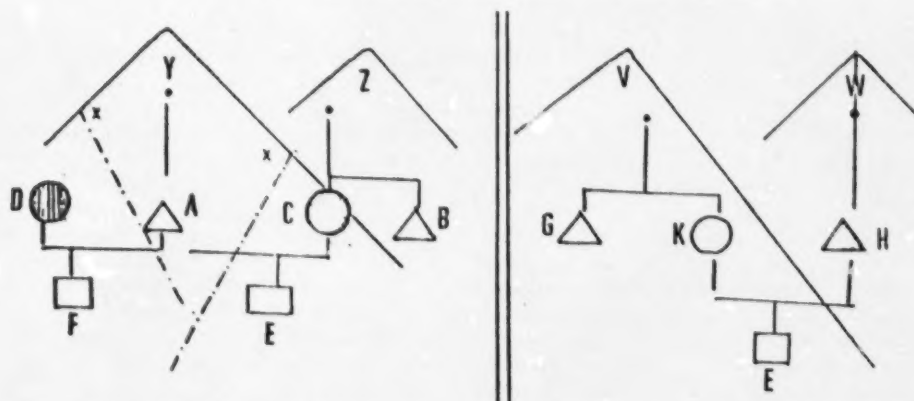
It should also be noted that polygamy is practised in the three regions and that a man has the status of husband to several persons at the same time. This arrangement enhances the relative value attached, with respect to ego, to the maternal or paternal relatives, depending on the descent system. We need merely emphasize the fact that marriage ties do not give rise to the formation of a new family unit. The descendants of a couple prolong the lineage of either the father or the mother, without the parent couple and its offsprings ever forming a relevant sociological entity. This has a number of effects as far as children are concerned:

(a) The child's "family" is bound to be either that formed by its patrilineal relatives or else that composed exclusively of its matrilineal relatives.

(b) Although looked upon as the "product" of a couple, the child is essentially regarded as being a collective "property" of the group to which it is attached. This view of things is consistent with the diversity of patterns of residence and also with the way in which these can vary. In fact, patrilineal societies in Tropical Africa and the Maghreb observe the patriloc or virilocal

rule of residence. By contrast, the matrilineal-descent societies existing in Africa practise a combination of residential systems that are marked by either matrilocality or patrilocality. Similarly, in societies of the first type, which also exist in India, it is fairly common for the wife, who goes back to her original family from time to time, not to have a stable place of residence. In so far as residence comes into play as a factor in defining the family and in so far as the principles governing social organization in Tropical Africa and the Maghreb have the effect of detracting completely from the value of the conjugal unit, the only stable environment that is offered to the child is, in fact, the paternal or maternal lineage. It can accordingly be more readily understood why the fundamental factor weighing in the balance for the contracting parties in marriage alliances is the appropriation of any future offspring in accordance with the following outline patterns:

Figure 1 - Legal family ties and residence of child E

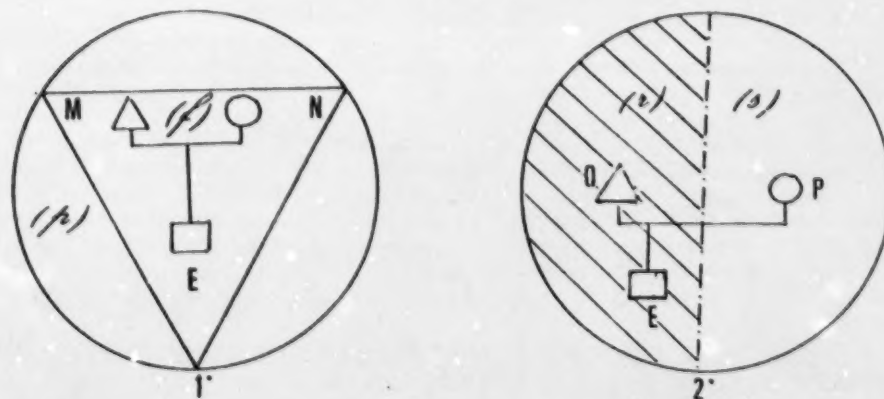


(1) In patrilineal and patrilocal societies, the child (E) lives, in principle, with its paternal relatives (shown as (A)), his mother (C) and his mother's co-wives (D) and their children (F).

(2) In matrilineal and matrilocal societies, the child (E) remains with its mother (K) and its matrilineal relatives shown as (G).

(c) Hence, the child's network of relations extends well beyond the circumscribed framework of what is generally understood by family environment and directly encompasses the entire range of bilateral kindred. That fact stands in rather marked contrast to the situation in the West, where the networks of both family and relatives tend to merge into each other and, as a result, the child's relational space is considerably reduced. By contrast, in the regions concerning us here, the denial of the triangular family unit and the greater significance attached to the world of kinship, as opposed to the family, are instrumental in extending the field of relationships open to the child.

Figure 2 - Kinship and family: the child's relational space



In the West, according to the modern acceptance of the so-called nuclear family, the child (E) is attached to a unit which it

In the societies of Tropical Africa, the Maghreb and India, the unit (OPE) is not very pertinent in sociological terms and

forms with its biological or social mother (M) and its father (N). The family domain (f) tends to cover over completely the relatives domain (P), where only a limited number of categories of relatives are encountered (grandparents, uncles and aunts, and first cousins). In practice, the relational space of the child is confined to (f).

its existence as an institution is denied. From the legal standpoint, the child (E) belongs to the lineage (r) of its father (O) but, in practice, its relational space covers the two areas (r) and (s) which, taken together, actually form its kinship network.

Thus, in the countries concerning us here, the word "family" does not refer so much to a restricted environment, in which relations between children and parents take on a particularly high degree of intensity, as to an infinitely wide-ranging social environment, where the child encounters its grandparents, its own parents, the father or mother's brothers, and the latter's wives and children. Such an "extended" family is more properly termed a domestic unit. In fact, in addition to the relatives listed above, people who are involved with them through a host of other links - notably as customers - often come together under the same roof.

The domestic unit brings together a large number of individuals. In Africa, for instance, if that unit is to be recognized as such, i.e. as a segment of lineage or a stock of descendants, it has to comprise at least four generations: a father would bestow kindness on his grandchildren and great-grandchildren, curb the mistakes of his own sons currently responsible for running the household, and keep watch on the comings and goings of the women leaving or joining the community. The child accordingly finds itself fitting into a network of relationships within which the different parental and social categories are represented and merged. In fact, more often than not, the purported language of kinship is the expression not so much of the kinship relationship proper as of the relations equality or inequality existing between two individuals. Discrimination in terms of age, for instance, is often very marked: while it confers authority on the elder, at the same time it entails a good number of obligations: a 5- or 6-year old child already feels responsible for his 2- to 4-year old sister or brother, and that responsibility is by no means theoretical but is reflected in the child's behaviour. At the same time, the sexual differentiation is also pronounced: for most day-to-day activities, the women are separated from the men, and the upbringing of the children prepares them for this discrimination, which they will have to abide by later in their lives. The world of the Maghreb exemplifies this point. The family community follows that pattern, in that it is composed of three subgroups: the women who, as a general rule, are tied to the home; the men, who go out to explore the world; and the children who, from the time they are weaned up to the age of about 7, take part together, without any distinction as to sex, in all kinds of domestic activities.

II. THE CHILD IN SOCIETY

"Somewhere, far from this world of ours, live those who the eye cannot see but the mind can imagine..." This is a story which all peoples recount and which every society represents after its own fashion. African mythology, for instance, teaches that the child comes down to earth, into the hollow formed by the couple, either as a new and original being or else as the reappearance of an ancestor, sometimes only passing through like a messenger and at others like a person who has to be accommodated into the group to complete a further life-cycle. In all cases, the arrival of a child is a good omen for the group for which it is intended. The birth is a source of collective rejoicing and an occasion for performing innumerable rites, "consecrating" its existence, accompanying the imposition of its name, granting it good physical and moral health, and so on.

As a rule (in all three regions), the child is born at the home of its maternal relatives and only later "enters" the father's home to join its family (in patrilineal systems), armed with blessings and with the magic powers protecting it. In southern India, these rights are even performed during pregnancy. The infant and the young mother then withdraw for a length of time ranging from one week (in India) to one month (in Africa), during which the people closest to them lavish all kinds of care on them. From this time onwards, until the child is weaned, it goes everywhere with its mother or with some other women, who may indeed be its elder sister. Going everywhere primarily means that the experience it acquires is of a twofold nature: experience of the extent of the kinship network and of the territory it occupies, and experience of the world of objects and things which it learns to sense and to handle.

It is more in the nature of a psychological weaning process than an actual stoppage of breast-feeding for, whether in Algeria, India or Africa, the child starts eating solid food, which may or may not be reduced to a gruel, at a very early age, while it is still being breast-fed. Up to the age of 2 or more, until the mother conceives again, it remains her "baby". It

only starts being thrust into the social space and hence being separated from the mother's body from the time it is confirmed that another child is on the way. It is then about two and a half years old. It is strong enough to stand on its legs and is able to express itself and control its body to an adequate degree. It is also sufficiently a part of the social space of the village to be able to accept the rules which, under the cultural rules, it is expected to perform.

The fact is that the child represents straightway the last link in a chain binding it, like its father, grandfather and other patrilineal male forebearers, to their common ancestor. Right from the outset, the child is a member of a community in the same respect as any other member, from whom it differs only in regard to the rank it occupies in the chronological order of appearance and to its physical strength, which governs the extent to which it penetrates its social world. In point of fact, the extent to which that world is open to the child depends on its sex and on its age, even when it is still very young.

Sociologically speaking, the child is in no way regarded as being an outcome of the marriage, but rather as one of its conditions. The people contracting the marriage alliance look upon the child as a factor weighing in the balance. In Africa, for example, while women promote the alliances necessary to the life of groups, the child is the factor which confers on them the social acceptance they seek. It can be gauged from this how important the child is in sociological terms, since it also contributes to the social advancement of its parents. It is true that men come of age socially in other ways: sooner or later, by virtue of the age-seniority principle, they will come to perform the father's functional role and their manhood will likewise be confirmed by the elders conducting the initiation rites. Even so, at the height of the social trajectory, their real status will still be governed by the numerical size of their progeny. Even more strikingly, the social destiny of women depends on the man's offspring and especially on his sons. This is true even in India where, as in Africa and the Maghreb, female sterility is not only a cause for repudiation but irrevocably bars the way to respectability or dignity.

More specifically, in lineage-type societies, the role of the child is even more significant: through being situated in the zone where two allied lineages overlap, it contributes to extending the kinship network and transforms its father's allies into relatives for generations to come.

Generally speaking, the child occupies a central place in all three types of society. In addition to having a psychological value (as is predominantly the case in the West) and an economic value (as in nineteenth-century Europe), it is a building-block of society as a whole. This is why, in the countries being examined here, the number of progeny does not depend on income level. People do not have a large number of children because they are poor and hope to become rich by producing more, but indeed because the child represents one of the links round which society is organized.

III. SOCIAL CONTEXTS AND CONCEPTIONS OF EDUCATION

The child as such becomes the focal point of many forms of attention emanating from its parental environment. In addition to the collective assistance which it enjoys from that environment, each of the parental categories performs a specific role on its behalf. This is true of the paternal and maternal grandparents and of the father's brothers and sisters. It is particularly true of the mother's brother, whose responsibility it often is to determine what occupation his uterine nephew will pursue. In the meantime, his task is gradually to extend the child's range of exploration and exchange, starting out from the "female space" dominated by the care lavished on it (bodily care and nourishment), right through to "total social space" by way of "male space" (wifehood).

As far as pre-school age children are concerned, this study will be confined to the time when it is psychologically weaned (from 2 to 2 or 3 years of age), and from its removal from the breast until sexual differentiation occurs when roles are apportioned on the total social space (from 3 to 7 or 7 years of age).

These phases are defined as social contexts of education, where the partners which the child encounters belong, firstly, to the women's world, i.e. its mother, her co-wives and sisters-in-law, and her mother-in-law. In the societies concerning us here, in which polygamy is the practice, the man - the father - is often the master and is situated physically (if not morally) beyond the child's grasp. In such cases, it is the child's grandfather or maternal uncle who maintains the most direct exchanges with the nephew or grandson, niece or granddaughter, as the case may be.

These societies attach considerable importance to a social dimension which we might call the "peer space", i.e. the children's group, literally a social body where the exchanges between members take on a significant educational value. The main activity engaging them is play, but it is a form of play which harmoniously combines the imaginary with the real and play activity with usefulness. In social space organized in this way, relatives play a considerable role in the education of the infant. The family - which encompasses virtually the entire kinship network - bears exclusive responsibility for this education, whose main features will be singled out in the final chapter of this study.

Regardless of whether they are familiar with written script or not, the societies examined in this paper do not take the formal approach to the transmission of knowledge. There is no body of theory to guide and dictate behaviour patterns and attitudes, in other words there is no system of education requiring a special place, specific educators and precise conditions for the children to fulfil (such as age). Education is merged with the act of living, having due regard to the practices obtaining. It might be advisable to qualify that remark by dealing separately with the religious sphere, since it could be said to enjoy exceptional status in India and the Maghreb. Apart from that qualification, there is scarcely any difference in the sphere of education in the three regions. At most, a distinction can be drawn between three main stages corresponding to the ages of childhood. In the first stage, the family endeavours to arouse the child's sensitivity: the body-to-body relationship is intense and unbroken and the child is frequently spoken to, although so-called baby-language is never used. From the time it is weaned, throughout the entire pre-school period, the child strives to explore the physical world directly, by touching and handling objects and performing technical operations. It is during this period that its sensitivity is tested by confronting it with the physical nature of things. Thirdly, at a later stage, the child will be expected to put two and two together and to apply its intelligence.

These stages are closely associated with everyday activities, which likewise cannot be broken down into game-playing and productive work or inconsequent actions and deliberate acts of learning. The following pages plainly show that education in Africa, the Maghreb and India is not spelt out in so many words but is practised and observed.

THE CHILD IN TROPICAL AFRICA

Education of the child of pre-school age in Africa can be defined by its double character as an education based on a local and non-formal model. In Africa, more perhaps than in any other part of the world, the confrontation of two socio-economic systems can be seen. Briefly, these can be termed traditional society and national society. The two systems imply totally different ways of life and cultural structures and the social changes are mainly based on the progressive integration of these traditional societies into the new nations. This confrontation of two very different and often opposing patterns is particularly noticeable in the field of education. Because of the almost total lack of national intervention in pre-school education, it is essentially a matter which is taken care of by the traditional society, hence its description above as local and non-formal.

One is justified in saying that pre-school education is above all a traditional education. By "traditional" is meant neither a set of archaic practices and concepts nor those which have been present for a long time. The term "traditional education" refers simply to all the practices concerning education, which are adopted in Africa and considered to be "normal" or "natural", and which have been sanctioned by the experience of generations.

Traditional education concerns the participation of people in the traditional social system, in an area limited to a village or a group of villages, and refers to concepts which vary greatly from one ethnic group to another. At the same time, this education is non-formal, since, by its very nature, tradition is largely unconscious and endowed with sufficient strength in African societies so that there is no need to rationalize it. Tradition asks only to be followed, not to be explained. Thus, a certain attitude towards children is adopted "because that is the way it should be".

I. FAMILY AND SOCIETY

I.1 African social structures

Most African societies have a lineage organization. In these societies not only economic activities, but also political organization, is ruled by principles based on kinship. The principal characteristic of lineage organization is to divide society into groups of individuals who consider themselves to be descendants of a common ancestor. This ancestor may be a mythical figure, or from a far distant past, in which case the group of supposed descendants is very large. But he can also be situated only a few generations back from his present descendants, and the group thus formed is then limited. These smaller groups are incorporated into the larger units, which in turn are regrouped into other larger ones, and so on back to the mythical ancestor, founder of the society. Although these systems can be of the most diverse structures, roughly three types of groups can be distinguished within a society: clans are rather large units and generally exogamous; one cannot marry within one's own clan. Lineages, of varying size, but smaller than clans, are groups defined by certain common activities and interests, and very often live in the same territory. Various types of lineages can exist within a society depending on their institutions. Finally, the smallest groups are the domestic units, which are often called "families", but with many reservations as we will see below. These units do not correspond to the term "family" in the European sense of the word; neither in terms of the individuals which constitute it nor in the structure of the group so formed.

Each unit is defined in contrast to others of the same level. Thus each major lineage is defined in contrast to other major lineages. On the other hand, each unit is integrated into others of a higher level and each individual is part of a minimal, minor, major and maximal lineage and of a clan; thus arriving at the top level, the whole of the Nuer society. Some systems may be somewhat different from this example, but two principles remain: the groups are defined in terms of contrast to those of a similar level, and in inclusive terms, with those of a different level.

The system thus formed integrates the new members and the children and assigns them a domestic unit, with one or more lineages, a clan or appartenance. Obviously, in order to do this, the society must give priority to a pre-defined method of consanguinity, through the father or the mother. In the former (patrilinear societies), the children are part of their father's paternal uncle's, paternal grandfather's group; but not of the same clan as the mother. The second possibility (matrilinear lineage), the child is integrated into his mother's, maternal uncle's group, but not into his father's. The consequences and the possible nuances of these various types of filiation, will be dealt with below. For the time being the most obvious consequences will be given.

Thus, referring to the Dagomba of Ghana(12) Chr. Oppong analyses the ideas concerning conception, which are proved by two apparently contradictory maxims: "It is the man, not the woman, who possesses the child", and "It is not only the man who possesses the child". The first refers to a generally accepted model which gives preference to patrilinear filiation. Thus one refers to a pregnant woman as a sack in which a man has left an object on deposit. This type of analogy would lead one to believe that the uterine line is completely rejected, and that the child has nothing to do with its maternal relations. But the fact that the opposite maxim can be evoked, shows that the lineal strategy can also be directed towards the recognition of parentage through uterine lineage. This model, which is not "officially" adopted, is, in fact, referred to in order to justify the claims of any group, to integrate the children of their daughters as well as of their sons into the group. In the Dagomba tribe it is frequent that an unsevered child and its mother go to stay with the family of the latter. The consequences of this procedure are that there is a strong tendency for children to identify themselves with the group of their maternal relations. One sees, therefore, that patrilinear filiation is only acquired, the father's group must use every means to "regain" a descendant which is literally going away from them.

Similar instances can be seen in South Cameroon, with the Dwala(3). Thus Bekombo considers the Dwala domestic unit, in its economic and juridical aspect, as "totally imaginary" since it later separates. This division of the domestic unit occurs when the sons reach manhood. Now the sons need the help of their maternal uncles for this, for the latter, among other things can obtain them a wife. Thus the maternal relations contribute to the disintegration of the patrilinear group, and to the creation of privileged relations passing down through the uterine line.

It is in the framework of this doubtful integration of the descendants, that we find the custom of a "dowry" as a condition of marriage. This "dowry" implies that the husband's group gives to the wife's group certain valuables (today, money), which has often been interpreted as the "buying" of a wife. However, actual experience has shown that the group does not "buy" the wife, but the right to consider her descendants as theirs. This is why the obligations concerning the dowry are often without end, the wife's group continuing to exert pressure to increase the sums due. In effect descendants must always be "reconquered, rebought", and in this meaning, the man always remains the debtor of his brothers-in-law.

Thus, in a patrilinear regime, the maternal groups always tend to integrate the children of their daughters into their group; and in a matrilinear system, it is the father's group that tries to "attract" the descendants to them. These characteristics of matrimonial alliance have many consequences on the child's life and education, which we will examine in the framework of the relationships within the domestic unit.

I.3 The domestic unit

If we use this term instead of that of "family" which is more generally used even in studies of African sociology, it is because the domestic unit has nothing in common with "family" in the European sense of the word. The "domestic unit" is usually based around a man and his wives (polygamy being extremely common) and their children. But it always has other members; first of all the relations of the head of the family, very often one or more brothers who are not yet married, as well as various relatives who are further removed, "associates", etc.

The relations between these protagonists is not only determined by each one's character and as is in all of Africa there exists a vast body of roles. A brief list must be given the characteristics of these roles, to define the relationships within the universe in which the child evolves, omitting, for the time being, the role of the mother.

These roles are generally played by several individuals, and, the role of the "father" defines the behaviour of several people, and not only that of the father in the biological sense. Thus the father's brothers have the same authority over a child as the father himself; and the same is true of other roles, which the system "distributes" to various actors. In African societies, one is generally more conscious than in Europe, that to be a father, a mother, an uncle, is not simply the result of biological reproduction, but that these roles imply a certain behaviour, and give a certain status in exchange. Thus, in Central Africa in certain patrilinear societies, strong reprobation would fall on a maternal uncle who is not willing to put all his belongings at his nephew's disposal; because one could not consider as a real "uncle" one who does not have the characteristic behaviour of that role. On the other hand, the family role contributes a social status; a man has no authority in society if he is not a father.

It must be kept in mind that the relationships between people are partly in keeping with these roles, and also in keeping with the relationships between groups. Thus the ascendancy of the father over his wives can be linked with the equilibrium of his relations with his allied relations.

First of all, it must be pointed out that marriage unites individuals of different groups, and does not, in itself, create a new group. The child will, therefore, come to know through his closest relations, representatives of two groups, and this has important consequences on the domestic unit as we will see later.

On the other hand, as a general consequence of the lineage model, each individual will be integrated into several overlapping groups. A person is, at the same time, a member of a domestic unit, a lineage and a clan group. These various ties contribute to the definition of a position in society. Thus, in Africa, the functions attributed to the family and the value given to it in other societies, is spread over these various groups. Marriage obviously affects not only the domestic unit since it creates or adds a new member, but also the idea of adherence to the clan, since one marries into a different clan and also a lineage, as we will be seeing further on. For this reason, when we discuss educational practices, we must take these different frameworks into account to understand their meaning. Education influences and is influenced by all these social domains. The domestic unit may appear to be the only "domain" of education, but this is an illusion, due to the fact that this unit is the most obvious. Clan and lineage have as much influence, although in a specific manner, on the life of a pre-school age child.

1.2 Marriage

Let us examine the framework which makes up the "family". It is first, however, necessary to consider marriage, which is the basis of the creation of the domestic unit. Many of the characteristics of the latter can only be understood when considered with reference to the special aspects of marriage in Africa.

Marriage in other parts of the world, particularly Europe, is generally the concern solely of individuals who, isolating themselves from their group of origin, form a new social unit. In Africa marriage can, of course, comprise the common goals of the two individuals concerned, but it is also, and above all, an agreement between their two groups of origin. This characteristic not only calls upon the intervention of the group in the choice of the spouse and the marriage negotiation, but, in effect, determines the sociological reality of the alliance made.

Marriage, in Africa, is a means for the group to create a progeny that is to say, to sub-sist socially. This is why, at least to some extent, the group controls the marriage of its members. This characteristic of the marriage alliance has numerous consequences on the organization of the family. Marriage does not, in itself, create a unit separate from all others. One of the spouses is integrated into the residential, production and consumer group of the other. It follows from this that an African child can never conceive of the group made up of his parents and himself as a social entity, as this group has no social or ideological basis.

Through marriage a relation of alliance is formed between groups, which is the basis of the cohesion of African societies; each group is linked by alliance to various others, that have given or received wives. As the creator of a progeny which perpetuates the group, marriage seems to meet the requirements of the simple logic of filiation, in which the father's group, in the patrilinear system, and the mother, in the matrilinear system, integrates the couple's progeny. The integration of an "official" filiation group (such as that of the father in a patrilinear system) is constantly being asserted. Thus, in the past, for the Fang of Gabon, boys had to know the list of their ancestors in agnatic line, from father to son, from the founding ancestor to him. (2)

Many other societies have comparable institutions, in which the child is situated according to a principle of filiation: the child knows himself to be the "son or daughter of X clan". But it must be admitted that, if this integration is explicitly stated, in actual practice it is not taken for granted. The filiation, which permits a group to consider a child as one of "theirs", is never automatically acquired, but has constantly to be regained. Indeed, the child is not confronted, as in Europe, with a single group, which unequivocally considers him to be one of them. In Africa, the allied group (that of the mother in the patrilinear system, that of the father in the matrilinear system) is equally felt and "claimed" by the child. This claim is made on two levels, according to the logic of representation and to the logic of social relationships.

For belonging to a clan is nearly always thought of in terms of the common possession of a certain essence; the members of a same clan consider themselves as having the "same blood", "of the same kind", etc., and this is linked with ideas concerning conception. Now no African society considers conception to come from only one of the generators. It is, therefore, necessary to suppose that one has "something in common", for instance with one's maternal relations in a patrilinear system.

with the minimal identity as a human being and as member of the group. This quality is not an immediate consequence of biological birth, which is why these rites, which mark "social birth", are not held until several days or weeks after the biological birth. A child who dies during this "latent period" is not buried in the usual way. They do not consider that a complete being has been lost. This clearly shows that the social existence of the child only commences with these rites, during which he usually receives his name.

But once the child has been admitted as a member of the group, society does not go any further in specifying his identity, at least during the period which we discuss here. This is in effect the principal characteristic of the period which precedes weaning. The child is present in society, but the latter has not as yet assigned him a precise position. J. Rabain qualified as "diffuse presence" this particular form of minimal integration of the child (16). During this period the child is constantly cared for by his mother, the women of the group who also assume the role of "mother", the latter's sisters sometimes, but often the child's own sisters. But he is not spoken to, and little is said about him; only later will he become someone to interrogate and think about.

At this time, the child is always with its mother during all her activities. Actually, until he is two or three years old the child stays in almost permanent physical contact with its mother. The latter answers to all his needs by her comforting physical contact. Thus the mother's body is the first, and almost the only, world of a child's first years. This "symbiosis" obviously has enormous consequence on the development of the child. In Europe, children experience the privation of maternal contact very early. Not so in Africa since the contact is permanent: the mother's work, including work in the field, requires no separation. When after all it does become necessary, the child is given to another woman of the group, but he is never left alone. Moreover, the mother achieves real status when she is constantly taking care of the child, and society expects her to be constantly available to do so.

Tactile exploration, centred mainly around the mother, widens progressively to include other members of the group, or strangers within the "concession", the group of dwellings which correspond to the domestic unit. Thus, when several adults are together in a courtyard or a dwelling, the child goes from one to the other experimenting different types of contacts and physical manipulations with those present. As J. Rabain, who has made a special study of the activities of Senegalese children, remarks, "the movements of a three-year old child can be entirely limited by bodies, and all his activities consist of going from one body to another". (17) This attitude of the African child is greatly encouraged by those around him, and it would be found astonishing, if not to say disquietening, if a child was too shy for physical games.

While the mother and the group encourage tactile exploration and the child's movements, and his games with adults, it must be noted that, on the contrary verbal exchange is rather poor. In Africa there is the inverse of the situation in Europe, where physical exchange with the child are limited, but where it is thought necessary to carry on "conversations" with him from the very beginning. In Africa, on the contrary, children are rarely spoken to, and verbal responses are rarely required. In Europe everyone watches for progress in the linguistic domain, it is often the main sign of his all-over development; in Africa, other signs are considered as important in judging development. While the group will admit the child's presence and physical games, he must not enter into the conversation, and he has no place in the adult's conversation. As the child is not encouraged to speak, in Africa there is no children's speech (baby-talk), no particular syntax or pronunciation specially used for children.

This marked attitude of the people directly connected with the child appears to have considerable repercussions on his development. Many psychologists have insisted on the relative advance of motricity (particularly axial) compared to the relative backwardness in the verbal performances of African children. The terms "advanced" and "backwardness" are used in connection with comparable performances of European children, for which theories of cognitive development have been worked out. Thus African children will walk earlier, will show a greater motor ability, but their acquisition of linguistic ability will be rather slow, as a result of a situation in which the richest and most diversified experiences and all pleasures refer to tactile expression and to physical, never verbal, exchanges.

A psychologist or a teacher coming from Europe is often surprised by the African child's reticence concerning verbal communication. It is not that their capacities are limited, but only their manifestation of them. This verbal reticence and its sociological explanation, show clearly that we have to do with a distinctive trait of African culture and probably not with the cognitive development of the African children. These distinctions are important and must be defined to the extent that those programmes destined to improve pre-school education cannot do without them. Since, depending on whether a behaviour characteristic is a social requirement or a physiological necessity, the possibility of changing and planning is completely different.

If a husband's authority is limited in Africa, that of the father on the contrary is very great. In the relationship between father and children all the tension which characterizes the relations between elder and younger in traditional society is expressed. No important decision concerning a child can escape the father's control.

In opposition, the relationships between brother and sister are characterized by closeness and always, by great fellowship. Thus a married woman can count on her brother's support in any difference of opinion with her husband's group. Reciprocally, among other things, through the marriage of his sister, a man can hope to receive a "dowry" which will allow him to find a wife; and the marriage of a sister, in any event, places at his disposal, the sporadic, although much appreciated, collaboration of his brother-in-law.

Finally, this summary portrait must be completed by a few remarks concerning relations with the maternal grandfather and uncle. The relationships between alternate generations is almost always conceived in the opposite way from that existing between adjacent generations; and very often grandparents have very close relations with their grandchildren, especially when they are very small. The relationships with the maternal uncle are more complex. In a matrilinear society, he is the principal representative of the group into which the child will have to integrate; he is thus a figure of authority, often more so than the father. On the contrary, in a patrilinear society, as we have seen above, the maternal uncle must permit his nephew to use and even take his goods.

The nephew's freedom can go very far, and everything happens as if the maternal lineage were trying to get the child over to their side. The latter tries out with his uncle a relationship with an elder from which practically all hostility is eliminated.

II. THE CHILD AND FAMILY LIFE

In this chapter we will describe educational practices as a whole, especially as linked to integration into the domestic unit. But, first of all, we can deduce some general characteristics of the domestic unit, some general traits concerning children's life in Africa.

II.1 The child and social life

In Europe, pre-school age children know two well-separated worlds: that of the family which is well known and is of great affective value; that of the outside world, which being vague and badly defined, does not seem to have much influence on the child. In Africa the situation is quite different. First of all the domestic unit brings together individuals of different groups, and interpersonal relations cannot be thought of outside of these group relationships. Thus, the child has intellectual tools available to understand all of society; alliance and filiation, the opposition between old and young make up, as we know, the structure of the social system.

Contrary to what happens in other parts of the world, in Africa it is not thought that social reality should or can be hidden from children and that antagonistic relationships are incomprehensible to them or hinder their development. It must be kept in mind that children, from their earliest childhood, participate in the whole of society. The individuals brought together in the domestic unit have relationships which are marked by only very general social rules. And, therefore, if formally two worlds exist, that of personal relationships with certain individuals and that of the social system in general, these two cannot constitute distinct entities in the eyes of an African child. That which governs society and that which rules family life is in the same order of things. It follows therefrom, that for the African child, there is no "discovery" of society at a given age; society has been part of his life from the beginning. Children's education and their integration into the family society is at one and the same time his integration into the whole of society.

This process, which forms the personality, can be divided into two large stages, separated by weaning. In effect, weaning marks the transition during which society's attitude towards the child changes profoundly and especially that of the family group. While the break is not as brutal as it is sometimes thought, the changes in attitude that it implies allow us to consider the pre-school age education of African children, as falling into two periods.

II.2 From birth to weaning

As for every event which directly affects the constitution of the social groups, the birth of a child is marked by a series of rites; the principal aim of which is to assign the new-born child

This integration is moreover, only one of the forms of insertion in social relationships which occur at this age. The child, who before being weaned did no more than explore and demand attention from a limited circle, is beginning to have specific social relationships not only with various members of the linear group, but also with other people. First of all, the child frees itself a bit from the family group, to spend his time playing with children of his own age. Since he is, for all practical purposes, deprived of speech and therefore, of any decisive action in the adult society, the children make their own particular type of society which plays the role of apprenticeship to social life very clearly seen in initiation groups. Thus, the Bwa of the Upper Volta, where among other things initiation reveals the secret of ritual masks, "each group of masks appears ... as a microcosm of village life". (7) As D. Paulme summarizes concerning West Africa - but the remark can apply to Africa in general - "the graduation of initiates is regulated by the image of society". (15)

Indeed, groups of children are not amorphous aggregates; they have a structure and their own tasks and work to do. Most of these tasks can be considered as games, although the children of the group often help in the adult's work. But this introduces a distinction which the African will not make spontaneously. Divided into groups, they have small hunts, from which only they benefit, or they guard the fields or watch the herds of animals, and this is part of the African conception of game, which is not opposed to "serious" "realistic" behaviour.

Like an adult, a child has all sorts of activities, from which one would not dream of separating games. Thus, it is rare that children are given toys in Africa; the idea of an object conceived by adults to create an imaginary situation for the child is foreign to African conceptions. On the contrary, African children create their own toys, often from odds and ends and they show great ingenuity in making their creations. Thus, wire and old metal is often used to make cars, the complexity of the finished product, as well as the necessity of using objects which have already been manufactured, shows the extent of the cognitive capacity used in children's handcraft.

We see here a realm of intellectual development which shows to advantage the value of traditional education. The dexterity to work certain materials and to make various objects, is highly developed, all the more so since children are not kept apart from adult activities. They can, and often must, help the latter in their work; thus the child participates in the harvest in agrarian societies, and with shepherds, watches the flock or takes it from one place to another. In town also, small jobs are often given to children. These jobs mark the children's integration into given models of adult behaviour. Thus children very early fit into the division of work by sexes; while the boys help the father, the girls take part in specifically feminine activities, nearly always cooking; but others too, such as fishing in the streams in Central Africa.

Again, there is no children's world, to the extent that a child participates in work and the tasks assigned to him are similar to those of the adult. As M. Fortes (9) remarks "the social sphere", which includes children and adults is indivisible. Thus Tallensi boys carry out minor agricultural activities similar to those of the adults but on a smaller scale. The boys, like their father, sow and reap on a few square metres in a corner of their father's field (10). The girls, taking care of certain crops, transport them and make food from them, thus integrating specifically feminine roles, the model for which is taken from the whole society. Thus childish "games" are modelled on the values of society; the adult world and that of the children are one.

This is emphasized by the fact that these children's "games", although often of limited economic value, cannot be overlooked. Thus, the children's fields produce crops; the food prepared by the little girls is really eaten. Sometimes the children's production is considered as that of the domestic unit or the lineage and generally, within the framework of the group, it permits them to undertake real economic activities - producing, distributing, investing, etc. Thus the children of the Bamiléké are initiated at an early age to domestic tasks similar to those of the adults and to which they are integrated.

This integration, particularly noticeable in the domain of economics, also plays a more general role in social relationships. Thus, a young boy who accompanies his father to the men's assembly, is not only learning a specifically masculine role, but learns to participate in those informal meetings where common problems are discussed. What is more, having been admitted, obviously in a passive role, as the son of such and such a group or of such a domestic unit, he learns there the position of this group with respect to other groups, and what the possible relationships are between groups, etc. The child learns the mechanism of social relations and everything having to do with the relationships within the hierarchy and the alliance (e.g. hostility, co-operation, etc.).

Weaning clearly marks the end of this period of intensified physical exchange with the mother. The term "weaning" should not be taken in the narrowest sense of the word, referring only to the change in diet. African children receive very early, in addition to their mother's milk, additional food, usually consisting of food eaten by the adults, or, at least, any part of what their body can tolerate. It can thus be considered that "weaning", in the usual sense of the word meaning when the child no longer sucks its mother's milk at the age of two or three, does not really exist, since the change in diet is very progressive.

On the other hand, in the realm of behaviour, weaning marks a definite break. In most African societies, the close tie with the mother is broken. The child really begins to integrate into the family group and into society as a whole. This can be thought of as a crucial period in affective development, much more so than in Europe. Indeed, the European child is deprived very early on of the satisfaction of his mother's presence, and, at the same time, starts very early experimenting with a series of procedures - first tears and later more complex means - to make his mother return. On the other hand, in Africa gratification does not seem to the child to be the result of pressure on those around him; indeed, it is given without any need of asking, before weaning. Afterwards, it is generally refused, no matter what the need. These relations of the child with the people around him necessarily influence the make-up of his personality. The African child wants to integrate a group which gives him a feeling of security, and not the satisfaction of interaction with other people, which in Europe is the basis of the personality. It is no doubt for this reason that satisfying situations, which in Europe spring from individual success, in Africa are often conceived of as a result of integration into a group and to rewarding actions or status.

II.3 From weaning to school-going

This period is all-determining in the construction of the child's identity. In many African societies, the child's real integration into the social group starts at this point and it is then that he is assigned a precise identity. The importance of this period can be seen if one considers the difference of status between a recently weaned child and a six-year old who must integrate into school life. A two- or three-year old child does not as yet have a sufficiently defined place in the group for him to have a precise role assigned to him in adult discussions. On the contrary, as of six-years old the child, by his actions and in social discourse, acquires a definite place as does each individual - sexual, linear, generational, etc.

At this age, the child's behaviour becomes a subject of discussion within the family or linear group, who tries to determine his personality, most frequently by giving him a role in a system of "characters", or psychological types, which society considers as all the possible personalities. In the same way, at this age, the child's behaviour is often interpreted with relation to various concepts concerning ancestors. Indeed, in many African societies it is not uncommon for the child's aptitudes to be considered as a sign of a special closeness to a particular ancestor. Without this necessarily being considered as the "return" of such ancestor, the group considers that this special tie will determine the child's actions, and in part, his position in society. Thus, the family group has at its disposal, with the various ancestors that have been remembered, a system of psychological portraits, relative to which the child can situate himself and which can form a support for his identification.

J. Rabain finds numerous examples of this among the Wolof of Senegal. Thus the silent introverted child is called a "bad person". He is almost considered as a reincarnated ancestor, and he is considered to possess unlimited knowledge. If the child speaks little, it is because like an old person he knows everything and his reticence is a sign of his power. The Wolof have various categories, to explain the behaviour of a child with reference to the world of his ancestors and of the spirits. Thus, there are four types of "silent" children, who have privileged relations with the ancestors. The child's integration into the family group presupposes "a whole theory of the individual and of society"(18), through the intermediary of these typical portraits.

Aside from this progressive integration, the change in the child's status can advance more rapidly in the course of various initiations. These rites, which exist to mark the passage from one status to another, are very different in importance and number from one African society to another. For Africa in general, it is thus impossible to describe the various initiations through which the pre-school age child must pass. The rite is not the conclusion of a long period of apprenticeship, since the initiation does not sanction a stage of maturity attained, but the possibility of the right to learn. Thus, progressively, these initiations confer to the child the right to participate in social life. These early social activities are in particular part of the framework of initiation groups, the fellowship of a "year" of initiates. "The crystallization of these groups of children which the initiation tests represent carries with it a less rigid dependence with respect to the family as well as a broadening of social relations."(14)

III. PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION AND NATIONAL INTERVENTION

Having described the organization of pre-school education without any reference to the national society, we can now study how the non-formalized frameworks studied above are part of the concerted actions of governmental origin which tend to transform pre-school age education. After studying several experiments carried out in Africa, we will try to make a brief evaluation. From there, taking into account the characteristics of the traditional society, some indications can be given as to the possibilities of concerted intervention. Obviously, this is not the place to make a complete evaluation of government action in the field of pre-school education nor the development of a programme. We will simply try to present some thoughts that the knowledge of traditional societies brings to mind in this context.

III.1 Experimental projects

Under this heading we can place all of the actions taken by the government in the pre-school field. For economic reasons, the African states have concentrated most of their efforts on school attendance between the ages of six and fourteen. It might have been thought that pre-school education was not immediately "profitable". It is true that at this age a child cannot acquire training in direct proportion to his future ability to integrate - especially professionally - into our modern society.

Experiments in nursery schools in Africa, on the whole, are principally inspired by European models. Thus, nursery school is an institution, run like a primary school, by government or local administration, with specially trained and recruited personnel. Children are not supposed to be taught as such and the whole system of tests (homework, lessons, exercises) which exist in school does not exist. Nevertheless, nursery school does have a specific scholastic aim in that it permits children to adapt to a new situation which will later be found in school. The child experiences community life, totally different from the children's group in the village. Children can also get used to methods used in school, which are very different from traditional ones. Knowledge is often separated from action, and comes from only one person, the teacher; and finally, is learnt cumulatively. On all these points, nursery school represents a useful transition between two opposite types of education. But manual activities and co-operation between children is not totally absent, as they will be later in the classical school system. Further, nursery school ensures learning the national language, which usually is one of the main obstacles to a child's progress in the school system. A child who has attended nursery school will certainly adapt himself better to the school world than those who have not been so exposed.

Projects of this type exist, for example, in Cameroon, in certain large cities.⁽¹⁹⁾ For lack of funds and in order to admit as many children as possible, these schools only take their pupils half time. These projects seem to fulfil their role of integration into the school world for those children who attend them. However, some reservations must be made concerning these experiments.

First of all, it would be unrealistic to hope that the education budget in the African countries would allow these projects to become universalized. Under these conditions, nursery schools will remain rare. They will exist only in big cities; and even there, their number will be insufficient and they can only take a small proportion of pre-school age children. Inevitably children of parents with influence within the administration and with social privileges will be sent to them. The creation of a few nursery schools will only accentuate the existing inequalities. In the first place, the difference between town and country (city children who will be able to attend are already in a privileged school situation) but also the privileges of socially favoured classes (for, even though education is free, poor African families must make considerable financial sacrifices to allow their children to go to school) will be accentuated.

Furthermore, nursery school is a national institution with little direct connection with the families. It is felt as a foreign world, and as such gives rise to resistance. It is difficult for families to admit that as of the age of two or four years old, their children are "taken away" from them by the national society. Nursery school is seen as one more step in the process in the disintegration of the family, which is further developed by the school in the eyes of many Africans.

Starting from these negative conclusions, among other things, other experiments have been conceived with the idea of better integrating these pre-school institutions to family plus village life. Senegal is an example where "child care" centres take the place of nursery schools, but with many advantages over them.⁽⁶⁾ The initiative for creating these came from the countryside. Villagers who work in the fields have to take their children with them; but the latter, when they are still very young, have nothing to do. With the help of social workers, the villagers

This period of childhood is, therefore, the real initiation into social relations. Contrary to European societies which hide social realities from the child, the African societies give him a determined place, in such a way that traditional initiation is the only solution to the continuity between the roles attributed to the child and the adult. At a very young age this status is experienced and this experience is nearly always marked by induction into a group. The child is thus part of an age-group, which must adopt a given behaviour towards others. He is also part of a family group, a lineage, a clan and his social existence cannot be conceived without reference to these groups.

II.4 Characteristics of traditional training

Having described the general stages of the pre-school African child's life, let us come back to this whole period, to study it from a narrower point of view, that is to say the type of training it gives the child. We will, therefore, now try to determine the types of knowledge and aptitudes this traditional education particularly emphasizes, and above all the methods used to ensure the child training.

First of all, it must be noted that apprenticeship in Africa is always connected with real-world actions, and it is rarely that they only exist to educate. Children learn, but not only in the framework which only exists to train. With the exception of learning in a traditional school the Koran in certain Muslim societies, before they enter formal school, African children are rarely confronted with social situations which exist only to train them.

African children learn above all through participation in the activities of the group, from which they are not excluded. We have seen above how the child integrates its sexual role by initiation to adult work. In this manner various techniques are learnt which permit them to earn their living. In a very general fashion, it is the participation in the "real" activities - not only aimed at learning - that knowledge is acquired. Thus a little girl knows how to prepare manioc because she has actually done it, with the help and corrections of her elders; and in the same manner, the boy learns to sow millet or to hunt only because he has done it since he was very small and in the company of men.

To sum up, it can be said that most of learning is done through practice and imitation. The African child, as in other countries, must assimilate knowledge and acquire aptitudes which will make him autonomous; but, in Africa, as opposed to other countries, he learns without consciously learning. This fact is very important, since in a large part it determines possible action in the field of education.

Knowledge is nearly always associated with knowing how to do something. And as knowledge is not separated from the action, it is also not separated from the individual. Knowledge is not considered as a mass of facts, that can be assimilated little by little or in part. This cumulative conception of knowledge is not very widespread in traditional Africa. Knowledge is rather considered as a state of being of the individual. By acquiring a certain status, by going through certain rites, one becomes a person "who knows" in a given domain. This is considered as a total transformation of the individual, and not as an accumulation of facts.

Also, it is impossible to understand the true nature of the training given to the children without mentioning the fact that this knowledge is part of a larger project, which applies to the whole life cycle. African societies do not train children with the sole aim of making them autonomous adults. The aim implicit in all educational practices is at the same time much more precise and more vast. In effect, in all African societies, the individual is expected to pass through various well-defined stages. Thus, the rights of birth make a human being; those of initiation, an adult; marriage permits him to accede to full social existence, etc. But education refers to this whole cycle, which ends with the status of an old person, a wise man; and finally, after death, that of an ancestor. The child's training takes into account the characteristics of this cycle; for, since childhood the individual has been confronted with this future offered by traditional society.

These traits of the training given to children implies that the function of education is mixed with general social life, and cannot be separated from it. As a result, there are no traditional education specialists, with a position comparable to that of teachers and professors in a national society. "The function of education tends to be diffuse and the authority it acquires is exercised collectively."⁽²¹⁾ There is no status of educator and if certain people are given the responsibility of organizing an initiation, for example, it is in connection with a particular competence recognized by society, and not in their sole capacity of initiators. The role of the traditional initiator as distinct from that of the modern educator⁽⁴⁾ and his functions, do not, in fact concern the same order of reality. Traditionally, the initiator does not transmit knowledge, but rather indicates the child which way to take to become part of all of humanity.

have, therefore, organized a "child care" centre, taken care of by the parents in turn. This organization has the advantage of allowing the children to receive a certain amount of training since the government has encouraged this initiative and has, to some extent trained those willing to take care of these centres. As a result of the advantage of not costing the government any money and involving the families directly in pre-school education, the experiment has been universalized and seems to be a success.

In the same way, in Nigeria, women working in the market of Ebute-Ero have developed a system of taking care of the children with a minimal amount of personnel.⁽¹²⁾ Although this experiment has received no government aid, and is, therefore, not universalized, it has existed up to the present with considerable success and is a good example of what local initiative can achieve in the field of pre-school education.

Compared to nursery schools, these "child care" centres have numerous advantages. First of all, they require only a minimal investment which should allow their widespread adoption in Africa. Then they are not felt as an intrusion of the national society in family life. Thus, the participation of the parents which is indispensable to the success of such an experiment can be very active. Finally, without mentioning the secondary benefits such as the possibility of taking care of the children and improving their nutrition, it allows the harmonious integration of the children into the school world by creating a "scale model" which is well integrated into village life.

III.2 Conclusion: traditional education and educational experiments

These few examples, together with the general framework of traditional education, that have been described above, make it possible to define the conditions necessary for any pre-school education experiment to integrate easily into village life. Indeed, the sociological and ethnological study of African societies allow us to understand why some experiments succeed while others fail.

First of all, African parents often seem to resist to the installation of pre-school institutions. They are too integrated into the school system and their only aim seems to be to hasten a child's attendance at school and, therefore, his detachment from the family. For this reason, pre-school experiments must not model themselves on schools, whether it be a primary school or a European-type nursery school. Pre-school education must not be oriented towards teaching as such and this point must be clearly understood by educators and explained to parents so that they do not see pre-school institutions as "extra schooling". These institutions allow children to adapt themselves better to formal school later on. Here again, an effort can be made to reconcile non-formalized teaching, more adaptable than that of the school, to the final goal of pre-school institutions, which is to help children get used to living in the school "society".

For this reason, parents must be closely associated with these experiments. This is the second condition of their success. For a pre-school institution to function properly, it is not only necessary for the parents to take part in its creation, but also in its conception and for them not to feel that the creation comes from the outside. Parent's participation can take many forms. As seen above, there are examples of projects initiated and conceived by the parents themselves. Without wanting to generalize from these examples, which would be the opposite of planning, it should be possible for parents everywhere to participate in experiments of a national origin. In certain parts of Africa, primary school is of great interest to the parents. For instance, the adults of the village repair the school building or school materials, etc. This type of participation may seem unimportant from the financial and material point of view, but they have a real sociological value. Since, in the end, the parents feel responsible for the school and its being well run. This is the only means by which the antagonism between the school and families can be eliminated.

This same type of participation is conceivable for pre-school projects. Parents can help in the material aspects of the experiment, they can even supply some of the personnel, responsible for running it. Thus in many African villages, during the daytime when the work in the fields occupies the adults, the children are taken care of by the old people who have to stay at home. It should be possible to use these traditional "child care" centres to create a place for the primary training of young children. A small number of people and a brief training for a few of the villages should be sufficient to transform "spare time" in the village life into a local pre-school institution. This latter, having been organized by the village and using its human resources, will no doubt, be accepted by all.

The problem of pre-school projects in Africa is not one of financing nor of personnel, but a sociological problem. It is necessary to adapt national activities to the level which is to receive

it, that is the traditional life of the village or part of a town. For this reason, it is impossible to conceive a programme to help in this domain which is not based on precise studies of the traditional educational framework, especially in so far as the family and its relations with the social life in general, etc., is concerned. Only on this condition can national programmes no longer be seen as ill-adapted interventions into local realities, and will they be able to participate in improving the education of young African children.

THE CHILD AND HIS EDUCATION IN TAMIL-NADU, SOUTH INDIA

This study, which is based on several visits to the Tamil-nadu, is not focused on a specific caste but describes facts observed in different places and also at different times. The groups studied, however, are all at much the same level in the hierarchy of castes: they belong to the low or middle castes of farmers living in small villages around Chidambaram, a great orthodox religious centre in southern India, about 100 kilometres from Pondicherry.

These are small farmers who have to subsist on land with scanty and irregular rainfall occurring mainly during the autumn monsoon. In addition to their meagre stock-breeding, they cultivate dry crops and crops irrigated by reservoirs, and thus, apart from milk, obtain ground-nuts, mainly for sale, millet, rice and sesame for their own consumption, a few vegetables, onions and flowers for the neighbouring markets.

They practise what is known as popular Hinduism, as opposed to orthodox Hinduism which is practised mainly by the upper castes. While the Brahmanic concept of the pure and the impure also governs their whole lives, their divinities - as opposed to the orthodox gods, have their place in time, through myths of comparatively recent origin.

Some differences in the structure of family relations are to be seen in the Tamil groups as a whole, and we have therefore been careful to consider here only those having the same social structure and the same type of family organization. The description given here will be confined to the common outline and some specific features considered important.

The study is made up of the following two main parts:

A concise description will first be made of the system of alliance, the family structure and the basic principles of the kinship system. The problems involved in the education of the young child will then be dealt with and an effort made, on the one hand, to single out the main characteristics and, on the other hand, to set out their practical aspects.

With regard to this latter point, it should be mentioned that there are one or more schools in every Tamil village. With the growing number of nursery schools, the age at which children start school has dropped from six to three or four years. However, while most children go to school, many families do not send their children to nursery school, considering that during the first years of their lives children need only constant care and affection. It will be seen later that the length of the period of constant care considered necessary differs according to the child's sex.

This study will deal only with the education of young children in the family setting and not with their education at school.

The period concerned, from birth to the age of school attendance, may be divided into three stages:

- (1) pregnancy and the neonatal period;
- (2) from the first months up to the time of weaning, namely, on average, two to two and a half years old;
- (3) from the time of weaning to the age of starting school (six or seven).

In the description of these stages, account will naturally be taken of variables such as the sex and age of the child and the family's way of life.

Political, social and cultural conditions are changing rapidly in India today, but these transformations do not seem to have had much effect on the educational methods, whether formulated or not, used in small villages. The impact of modernization is only clearly felt among adolescents and adults of both sexes whose attitudes show signs of some degree of emancipation from tradition. This departure from tradition is to be seen in particular at the time of marriage, the choice of an occupation or of a home, etc.

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I. MARRIAGE ALLIANCE AND FAMILY STRUCTURE

In theory, the Tamils follow the system of unilineal descent. The majority abide by the patrilineal and patrilocal system but a minority follows the alternative matrilineal and matrilocal system.

For ease of presentation, consideration will be restricted in this study to the patrilineal and patrilocal groups which form the majority.

One of the salient characteristics of the Tamil system of alliance is the preference given to the marriage of matrilineal cross-cousins; in fact a marriage between a woman's son and her brother's daughter is preferred to any other. In a society giving priority to paternal descent, this practice underlines the renewal of the alliance between two identical lineages: the father and the son belong to the same lineage X; in parallel, and in accordance with the same principles of descent, the aunt and the niece belong to the same line Y; in this way, in practice and with a difference of one generation, the father and the son draw their respective wives from the same line Y (L. Dumont, 1975). A marriage between cousins is sometimes arranged very early, when the children are still very young; when the marriage takes place, a dual relationship is established between the marriage partners and the preceding generation, now made up of persons who are both blood relatives (uncle and aunt) and relatives by marriage (mother-in-law and father-in-law). This dual status of the members of the family circle will have a fairly definite influence on their attitudes towards the children. We shall return to this point later. In practice, this type of preferential marriage is often confined to the elder son, and only if the girl cousin considered is of about the same age as the young man. All sorts of waivers may be granted. A penalty may even be paid to the parents of the girl to enable the young man to sidestep this rule and marry another girl.

Apart from this preference rule, marriages are undertaken on the basis of the following three principles:

prohibition of relatives of the paternal and maternal lines to the third degree (respect for exogamous unity);

circumscription of the alliance within endogamous unity (usually the caste or the subcaste);

exclusion of too great age differences and overlapping of generations (at least for a first marriage).

In these lineal societies, marriage is not the union of two individuals but of two lines of descent by means of an alliance. In the case of the preferential alliance, two lineages may remain in the same relationship of alliance for several successive generations, and it is only necessary to note, as L. Dumont (1975, page 48) does, that marriage is "an institution linked with others in a coherent whole", to realize that the long-term sociological consequence of the preferential alliance is the manifest strengthening of endogamous unity. More generally speaking and as is the case everywhere, the immediate consequence of marriage is the continuation of the line of descent by the addition of new members, the children born or to be born, and especially the sons.

In these patrilineal and patrilocal societies, the wife lives with her husband's parents. It is important to point out at this stage that this does not only imply a change of home for her but a real transfer from one district to another, or even from one village to another; her new circle will be made up entirely of the classificatory or blood relatives of her husband. It should also be noted that few undivided families remain today in Tamil-nadu at least in the middle and lower castes. A household comprises a maximum of three generations: the husband's parents, their married and unmarried sons, the wives of the former, the unmarried daughters and the children of married sons. There are two quite distinct streams running through the domestic unit, that of the men and that of the women, under the overall authority of the men, such authority being mainly exercised by the oldest man. On the other hand, the mother-in-law rules over all the women. The wife will only acquire some degree of autonomy when children and particularly sons are born to her.

The splitting-up of the household may often come about, when the couple has been married for about ten years and the children are no longer in their infancy, and it is considered able to look after itself on its own; the break also occurs after the death of the oldest male member of the household. This separation tends to occur earlier and earlier today, independently of these two traditionally determining factors.

We do not intend to make a critical analysis of the relationships between the members of a given line of descent in this study, but to bring out the composition of the family circle in which the child spends the first years of its life. Paternal grandparents, parents, the father's brothers and their wives, the father's unmarried sisters, the children of the father's brothers - the child will be surrounded only by the members of the father's family.

Family relationships are based on two basic concepts: the distribution of tasks between the sexes and hierarchy according to sex and age.

The men work in the fields - helped at times by the women, who are also responsible for running the house and bringing up the children. Every woman in the household is perceived as a mother not only for her own children but also for those of her brothers-in-law; in the same way, the children of the different couples have brother-and-sister relations with one another.

The women owe the greatest respect to the men. The wife withdraws into another room when her father-in-law comes in. And the notion of age is added to that of sex. The new wife often has an easy relationship with her husband's younger brothers but must treat older women with the greatest deference.

The differentiation according to age and particularly the distinction between an elder and a younger brother covers all generations and, since these notions are expressed in the terminology used in the family circle, the child absorbs them very rapidly, when he is learning to speak, thus finding his place both in his family circle and his social circle.

In fact, there is no term to designate simply the brother, but a term designating the "elder brother" Annan, another to designate the "younger brother" Tambi; the same phenomenon may be observed with regard to the sisterly relationship: "elder sister" Akka, and "younger sister" Tangacci. The same applies to the father's generation: the father's brothers are either "elder fathers" or "younger fathers". In the vocative the name of an elder is never used, but the appropriate parental appellation (L. Dumont, 1957, p. 205). In the same way, the courtesy plural is used when speaking to elders but not to youngsters.

In the paternal house, the child is surrounded by many "mothers" and "elder sisters" who give him their full care and attention, and by "fathers" and "brothers" with whom he has more distant relationships.

Two types of behaviour are to be found between the child and his elders according to generations and no longer only according to sex. When outsiders are present, considerable reserve between his parents and himself; open and reciprocal familiarity between the grandparents and the child. In addition, a very strong tie links the brothers and sisters, a tie which will not be broken by the separations involved when the sisters get married.

The wife goes home to her own family every time she is to give birth. The arrival of the child is an important event not only for the husband's family but also for the social prospects of the wife herself, and this is why so many guarantees are needed for the delivery. In her own family, the wife finds the material and psychological security which she does not altogether enjoy in her husband's family in which, up till then she feels a stranger sometimes exposed to the jealousy of her sisters-in-law and the authority of her mother-in-law. It should also be recalled that the mother's family will have a dual status vis-à-vis the new baby that of maternal relatives and that of connections. The mother thus feels doubly protected. In addition her feeling that she has "done her duty", that she has paid her debt will be strengthened when she goes back to her husband with a child in her arms which she thus "offers" to the line of descent.

The relationship between the child and its maternal uncle, its mother's brother, is of very great importance throughout its life. The maternal uncle feels responsible for the child and is ready to replace the father if the latter should disappear: in particular, he would keep his nephew until the latter could do so himself. The maternal uncle finds wives for the nephew. He is both an attentive relative by virtue of the special relationship between brother and sister and a future economic ally.

II. TRADITIONAL EDUCATION IN THE TAMIL COUNTRY

II. 1 Pregnancy and the neonatal period

The young woman who becomes pregnant acquires a new status among her affines: she has given proof of her fertility and is bearing a child who, if a son, will ensure the continuation of

the lineage. The menfolk immediately become less reserved towards her. Her husband expresses his contentment and even her father-in-law makes one or two allusions to the subject. Her mother-in-law also becomes less severe and relaxes somewhat her supervision of her daughter-in-law's behaviour. Her sisters-in-law provide her with advice and relieve her of part of her work. Everything points to the fact that the pregnancy must be protected: the child is welcome, and all hope it will be a boy.

It should be pointed out at this point that within the framework of the government's efforts to restrict the birth rate, a recent law authorizes a State official to have only two children if one of them is a boy, and a third if the first two are girls. This law affects the middle and lower castes considerably, since, with government aid some of their children study to become officials at the level of their region. Since the introduction of this law, the birth of girls has become more readily accepted as it is no longer authorized to continue having children until such time as a son is produced.

However, for the mother, the birth of a son assures her of a stronger position than does that of a daughter in her family environment since it fulfils her first duty as regards her affines.

The young woman's diet is enriched to the extent of her family's possibilities. She eats more eggs, chicken and bananas and drinks milk that is normally reserved for the children because of its scarcity. She avoids eating certain substances that are reputed to cause abortion, such as millet.

So as to make the child strong, the young woman must undertake physical activity such as grinding grain. For the child to have a well-balanced and calm temperament, she must avoid any fits of temper. She must also elevate her thoughts, avoid all defilement, and fulfil her religious duties. In some orthodox castes, she recites sacred verses out loud so that the child will be born with a certain knowledge of the religious texts. This all illustrates the fact that for the Indians, the child must be educated from the earliest stages of gestation; it is said to hear what is going on around the mother, feel what she feels, be reached by her thoughts, at the same time as developing its memory and intelligence *in utero*. It is interesting to note that concern about the state of the child-to-be is focused mainly on its physical and moral health.

It is not our intention to describe here the ritual surrounding pregnancy or birth for it is not directly connected with actual education. However, it is to be pointed out that so as to avoid the evil spell or jealousy of certain gods, no plans are made for the unborn child: no forecast is given about the sex or character of the expected child.

Some weeks before birth, the future mother returns to her parents' home and stays there after the birth for an odd number of months: one, three, five or seven; she really takes up all her previous activities only some 40 days after her child's birth.

During her stay back in her family, her husband visits her as often as the distance between the two houses will allow, but the couple are not entitled to have sexual intercourse during the entire period.

It is reported that at birth, "a male member of the family, selected for his intelligence, places a stick (or his finger) soaked in oil (castor oil) or milk in the newborn child's mouth and says 'may your intelligence depart and mine enter'" (L. Dumont, 1957, p. 235).

Firstly, 12 hours after birth, even before it is breast-fed, the child is purged. It remains naked with just a cloth wrapped around its waist which it keeps on until its navel has dried. Its first weeks are spent, almost entirely against its mother's body with her breast constantly within its reach; at night-time, it sleeps in her arms and during the day, when she is sitting on the ground, she lays the child along her stretched-out legs. The baby is never left alone. If the mother is not holding it, the maternal grandmother or one of the other women of the household will.

From the very first days of its life, the child is bathed and massaged with oil every day, usually in the morning at the time of the ritual bath. Massage has an important place in the care given to the newborn child, lasting almost an hour and dispensed by the mother daily until the child can walk. The process starts with the lower limbs and thence works its way up to finish with the head. The child displays a true sensation of pleasure during these sessions, smiling and opening its eyes wide.

The newborn child is not allowed to cry; to soothe it, the mother first offers it her breast; if that does not suffice, the child is rocked to sleep. This rocking is more frequent during the

hottest spells, so that the motion gives the child the impression of a slight cooling breeze. This rocking motion is accompanied by a number of cradle-songs and lullabies sung in a soft murmur. Most of them are plays on syllables or prayers recited in a low voice.

When the time comes, the husband collects the wife and child and takes them back to his parents' home. The welcome is even warmer than on the arrival of the newly wedded wife, particularly if the child is a boy. The grandfather is the first to take the child in his arms; he then hands it on to his wife who immediately starts to cuddle it. A few words of congratulation are said to the parents, and neighbours come along to take part in this home-coming: it is in this way that the child starts its life in the lineage which is actually its own.

II.2 From the early months to weaning: the child in its family

Whatever its sex, the child spends these two years among the women, and it is a period during which it constantly receives the tender care of those around it: it is never left alone and is almost always in the arms of one or other of the women or young girls of the house. In this respect, there is no child/adult segregation, nor any spatial isolation of the children. The child sleeps by its parents' side at night if the couple sleeps together; if not the child sleeps with its mother. During the daytime, it sleeps either in the arms of a woman or on the ground on a sheet close to the women, indoors or outdoors, and sometimes even in the fields if its mother is working there.

During its waking hours the child is closely surrounded. Its activities are divided between physical care, feeding and playing. It has been noted above that the child is bathed and massaged every morning. It is soon dressed with little wrist and ankle bracelets, and kohl is rubbed into its eyes to protect them from infection. The child goes about naked but bejewelled. Whenever it dirties itself it is washed and dried immediately, importance being attached to such dirtiness, which is not considered to be impure, as it will be later on when the child has grown up.

The child is breast-fed until it no longer feels the desire, unless a subsequent birth results in an early weaning. If the mother does not have enough milk, another woman from the family can replace her while at the same time feeding her own child. The child is surrounded by tit-bits particularly from its grandmother. Little by little, it adds to its mother's milk. Very young babies already seem to be accustomed to ginger-based sweets. Caramelized flour cakes are bought specially for them.

It is commonplace to see women sitting on the ground with a baby facing them in the hollow of their saris: usually it is the grandmother but it can also be the young girls or women from the neighbourhood or even the mother itself. It is playtime. The woman sings short songs to it, strokes it, tickles it and plays with its hands and feet; she talks to it, often telling it that she thinks it is a "little king" or a "treasure", and calls it by all sorts of invented names ...

"The ties between mother and child are intimate and deep. It is often said that the mother's lap (tayi madalu) is where the child feels safest ..." (Srinivas, 1976: page 141).

The father also plays with the child during his moments of relaxation, but never in front of his parents. He is very gentle to his child in private and does not like to refuse it anything.

The mother, who may spend hours playing with her child, displays great reserve in front of her parents-in-law and if the child cries, she waits for her mother-in-law to instruct her to put it to the breast before doing so.

The young girls of the house have a lot to do with the baby; they look after it when the adults cannot and take it everywhere with them, carrying it on their left hip, and making it join in the games of the much older children of the neighbourhood, even before it can walk. The child very soon wants to cling on by itself with its legs.

It takes part as a spectator in the life of the household. It observes the daily housework of the women, sees the men coming in for meals, watches the women serve them and then eat themselves afterwards and, above all, withdraw at a distance from the men. The child is always where the women are and very early on in life notes the separation of the two sexes in both space, tasks and attitudes. Unconsciously, initially as a spectator, it becomes aware of the notion of hierarchy and the way it functions within the family.

Then comes the period of learning various things. There is the task of learning to walk, with all the various attendant tactile experiences, in a period devoted to familiarization with the material universe. It is the age of exploration, at first indoors, then outside the house,

holding on to the skirts of the young girls of the household or the women's saris, and later by itself, following in their footsteps.

This is the time when it learns the language, first in syllables and then through the simple words which it hears most often, such as the forms of address which it is made to use or by which it is greeted. It accordingly manages to pinpoint its place in the family environment through the terminology of kinship. If the child is the eldest son, for instance, only his father and grandfather and men older than himself have the right to use his first name (which is usually the name of a god of the lineage). If he is a younger son, all his elders call him junior brother, Tambi, etc.

This is also the time when the child learns about cleanliness, not as systematically as in Western societies. The mother does not scold the child too much for the "dirt" which it may have spread all over the place, but first takes it into the garden to relieve itself, until it learns how to ask, after which she will take it into the fields along with the other women like the adults.

As soon as the child starts to talk, it is taught a few ritual words and it is made to repeat these in front of an image, which it soon learns to recognize as a divinity. It sees its mother propitiating the image regularly, and this adds yet another dimension to its still imperfectly shaped world.

As the child acquires these techniques, it comes directly into contact, without realizing, with the concept of pure and impure which governs the lives of Hindus. In fact, from the first time it attempts to raise food to its mouth, it is taught always to use its right hand, as it is for giving and receiving. It uses its left hand for washing after urinating or defecating. It only comes to do this by itself at a much later stage, but it has already seen its mother and sisters using the left hand.

By washing the child as a matter of course as soon as it has to be purified from a contaminating contact, the idea is instilled in it that such contacts are bad and that it has to wash itself in order to purify itself from them. It is only years later that it starts to perform more elaborate purification rites.

Throughout this period and until it is weaned, the child is, in fact, looked upon as a small baby. It is not physically punished and very little authority is exercised over it. People very often give in to it when it cries. "The father is usually very kind and patient and is as motherly as it is possible to be with his small children" (L. Dumont, 1957, page 211).

This first period of discovery comes to an end when the child is weaned. In most cases, this takes place naturally and the mother suckles the child for as long as it insists. However, in addition to being breast-fed, the child has already been eating real meals for some considerable time. Even if the mother is pregnant, she tries to continue breast-feeding until the end of pregnancy, although some castes consider that this is harmful to the foetus and therefore wean the child suddenly, with an apparently rather traumatic result. L. Dumont (1957, page 211), reports the case of a woman who had breast-fed her first child until the end of the second pregnancy and who disappeared during the week's confinement required following the birth. The father had to spend all his time with the child, which had suddenly been separated both from the mother and from breast-feeding, and he did not know where to turn in order to pacify it.

Weaning marks a virtually clear-cut break between mother and child. Often because a new child commands all her attention, she stops looking upon the first-born as a baby and, instead of leaving it with other women - who are probably also occupied with looking after other infants - she entrusts it to young girls who are only a few years older. For the child, this signifies a break at several levels, both in its exclusive relationship with its mother and with its environment, since the young girls spend most of their free time outside the home with other children in the neighbourhood. A sharp change also occurs in the attitude of adults towards the child, in that the voice of authority becomes more insistent and restrictions are placed on it. It is at this time that it starts to become aware of its own sex and the two streams of education according to sex begin to take shape.

II.3 From weaning to school age

The three-year old, feeling rather neglected by its mother, who often has to cope with a new-born child, is increasingly surrounded by its grandparents, who do their utmost to help it overcome the shock.

During this period, it has long discussions with the grandmother who, to occupy the child, tells it long stories about the family. However, she also recounts the religious myths she knows and explains to it the powers possessed by a particular god of close concern to them - such as lineage or village divinity - by means of examples taken from events that have occurred in the lineage or village during her lifetime. It is at this time that the child starts asking itself questions, and it is interesting to note that it is the older people of the once-removed generation who provide the answers and hand down their knowledge.

The child learns an enormous amount from these anecdotes, stories and myths. In the first place, it learns the family genealogy (Chaudhury, 1968, page 52). It also learns what constitutes "good" and "bad" behaviour. The image of the man or the women which the child is expected to become gradually takes shape. We shall see below how, at the same time, its daily life will come to underscore the "moral" and "social" content of these stories.

The religious background also starts to take shape in the child's mind, and it learns what its duties are in that regard and how it could be punished for bad behaviour, since village myths often describe dramatic situations where punishment is meted out for failure to observe ritual.

Both the grandmother and the other members of the family speak about the village to the child, and it soon learns everything about its neighbours and especially about the position they occupy in relation to its lineage.

The child is accordingly regarded as being capable of understanding. The attitude which adults adopt to it becomes more rigid and strict. The change is even more visible in the child's relationship with its father for, although the mother appears more remote, she is always ready to forgive her child's mistakes, whereas the father increasingly represents the voice of authority.

As it roams through the village, the child learns to reconcile its theoretical knowledge with reality, and it will have to learn to fend for itself in day-to-day conflicts and contacts with other children in the village.

This period is one where the child enjoys considerable freedom and engages in play, but its life at all times is now conditioned by its sex. We go on to describe below the everyday life of a child, according to whether it is a boy or a girl.

(a) Education of boys

The characteristic feature of education at the age in question is the very limited number of obligations incumbent upon the boy. These obligations are essentially of a family, religious and social character, and all three of them represent yardsticks by which it sets its standards throughout life.

The boy is no longer regarded as a baby that only makes demands. He is a member of the community and, as such, has now to respect the social order and adjust his language and attitudes accordingly.

He has to learn how to make judicious use of the forms of address. While he remains on very close terms with his grandparents - although his relations are less close with his grandfather - he addresses his parents in a reserved and respectful manner. The boy has fewer exchanges with his father and the relationship between them is plainly one of junior to senior and is marked by submission to authority. Naturally, the change does not take place from one day to the next but follows a slow pattern running parallel to the language-learning process. He takes up the behaviour models suggested to him by his brothers or cousins and increasingly identifies himself with the ideal masculine image evolved by his group. In that regard, he derives considerable encouragement from the attitude of the other members of the family community to him. As every day goes by, he is made all the more aware that he is a man. His mother, for example, never calls him by his name, as she would do in the case of a daughter, and she will ask a sister or a female cousin to call him in her place. The marks of respect between mother and son are reciprocal. He is constantly reprimanded for the mistakes he makes. He is provided with examples of behaviour, in particular by means of a variety of anecdotes, which he is expected to copy.

At the end of this period, when the child reaches school age, he is indeed a "little man" and is thoroughly familiar with the family code of conduct and his place in the social scale of his group. He no longer plays with girls and henceforward tends to show a measure of contempt for them, although he still maintains privileged relations with his sister or the girl cousin who looked after him from the early months of infancy and carried him around with her everywhere.

The child's religious education throughout this period is centred more specifically on the concept of impurity. We have already seen that the child becomes acquainted with the divinities through the stories recounted by his grandmother.

It should be pointed out that the knowledge acquired in this area is scanty and it is a frequent occurrence for a man or woman, when questioned about the pantheon of a temple of lineage, to be unaware of its total composition. The child must be taught to distinguish between left and right. Already during meals he is made to use his right hand to take food to his mouth, his left hand being reserved for holding recipients or pouring water over the other hand to wash it at the end of the meal. The left hand is in fact reserved for "unclean functions" of the body and must under no circumstances touch the food. It should be pointed out here that all secretion of the body are unclean for the Tamils: thus the child is shown how to take food to his mouth while at the same time avoiding contact with his saliva.

The child is no longer allowed to relieve himself in the house or garden, but must go into the fields at the same time as the other men, morning and evening. However, still he goes in the company of the womenfolk: they generally go in a group to a place reserved for them where they are less likely to meet any men.

The child is kept away from any contact with the members of a very low caste or the untouchables and is obliged to wash himself if ever that occurs. So much is said about these contacts that the child very rapidly avoids them or washes automatically.

He takes part in the religious festivities with the others and copies their attitude. The child has no independent religious or ritual action, since the religion in which he takes part rather demands collective activity.

His social apprenticeship involves precisely the process of learning how to situate himself in relation to these groups. He is a member of a particular house: to what lineage does he belong? Who are his relatives? His affines? What is his place in the caste hierarchy of his village? Who is he allowed to frequent? What is the right attitude to adopt towards X, Y or Z, also members of the village? A child of that age is not only in contact with the members of his family but also with the entire neighbourhood. The child does not go through this period of learning alone. It is a well-known fact that he makes his entry into the outside world through a sister or female cousin who acts as mother to him. The child immediately becomes part of the network of relationships of that young girl, most of which are, moreover, women. Because of his sex, he gradually moves away from this group and turns then towards the brothers and male cousins and friends of those girls.

Constantly before him will be the example set by his female relative, together with the protection she and the other children - for whom initially he is a toy - afford him. Girls are greatly encouraged to build up their maternal instincts. It is only little by little that the child is left to fend for himself, and even then, this is only to a limited extent, since the older children are never far away. His basic activity is playing and chatting.

During all these learning activities, there are no specific moments for specific subjects, and everything is done as it happens, particularly by way of example. From morning to evening, apart from eating and sleeping times, the child plays, listens to stories of the forefathers and chats.

The child plays outdoors with a group of other children from the village. He often plays with natural materials such as bits of wood, stones, creepers and even at times with animals. In the market bazaars and shops can be found papier mâché or wooden figurines representing human beings, animals, gods, houses, boats, cars, etc., even temples. However, such toys are not often to be found in the possession of children as their families are often poorly off financially.

The child often plays sitting on the ground, either alone or with a partner. When alone, he plays with small pebbles and bits of wood and he is often to be heard talking to himself as he draws on the ground. When with a playmate he plays games of chance or skill, similar to "battleships", "draughts" or "noughts and crosses". One of their games, for example, consists in spreading out over various squares a set number of small round objects (pebbles, dried seeds, fruit kernels, etc.), with the distribution leading to one of the two players having more objects than the other. Whenever a player empties one of the squares, he can take for himself the pawns on the next square or vice versa. The game continues until there are no more pawns left to spread out in the squares. The child may play this game for hours.

Apart from these static games, the child takes part in individual or team races; he also practises chase games between two sides, as well as "hopscotch" and the suchlike.

One of their favourite games, particularly during the hot seasons, is bathing, either in the river or the backwaters. This involves much shouting, splashing and joking, and may also last for hours. The child learns to swim by himself through forces of habit; even the youngest children seem to have no fear of water; they first enter it in the arms of a woman.

Finally, the boys often play with animals, frequently throwing stones at dogs or chasing them, or sitting on the backs of goats or cows.

They are witness to everything that happens in the village. The whole band rushes to hear any news, which they then discuss between themselves. The arrival of the bus linking their village and surrounding ones is one of their favourite distractions, particularly if the bus holds strangers whom they then go and inspect at close hand.

The children we were able to observe are often in the process of crunching or chewing sweets. Chewing-gum which is catching on, sweets costing only a few pence (paisas) and toasted flour cakes are the usual sweets, and each family, particularly the grandparents, tries to put some money aside to buy these dainties; for the children, the best time of the day is undoubtedly the moment of choice at the small village stall which sells everything from sweets, cigarettes sold individually, betel and paper or wooden toys to soap powder and other common household necessities. At this time of the day, girls and boys often find themselves reunited. Most of the time, parents are content to give the children one or two paisas and let them go to the stall by themselves.

When he reaches school age, the boy shows himself to be highly independent, totally informed of his role in the community and fully aware of his superiority over girls. He knows how to distinguish good and bad manners and already holds a position in society. This independence does not mean individuality, since the child is to be constantly aware that he belongs to a group comprising other members around which his life will be organized.

(b) Education of the young girl

Whereas this stage of development has been seen to represent a period of freedom and play for the boy, it appears much more constraining for the girl, who very early in life must help the womenfolk of the house. The little girl of this age is cared for and at the same time cares for others. It is commonplace for her by then to be in charge of a younger sibling, carrying it around on her hip, at times for hours, until a woman relieves her.

It is not our intention to describe here once again the activities that the young girls have in common with the boys; we shall merely mention them and, in passing, specify any differences due to sex. Our main task will be to describe those which are specific to them and the major guidelines for their future life.

It has been seen that the education of the small boy tended particularly to teach him the place that was his in the family, religious and social spheres, and what his rights and duties were. In was also seen that at this age, while making him realize that he was an indissociable element of his group, towards which he would have a number of duties throughout his life, he was allowed to enjoy a considerable amount of freedom and the period was still basically one of rights for the child.

The same does not apply to the small girl: as soon as she is old enough to understand, she is taught the idea of duty at all levels of her activity - even, as we shall see below, in her playing. Thus much greater stress is laid on the notion of respect as she learns of the hierarchy within the family than is the case for the boy.

A sort of inversion is established in the parents' attitudes towards their children, depending on their sex. On the one hand the mother is just as lenient with her son as she is strict in her relationship with her daughter; on the other hand just as the father draws gradually farther away from his son as he grows up, so he shows great tenderness towards his daughter until such time as marriage takes her away from him. Rivalry seems to be a salient feature in relationships between men in this patrilineal society. The daughter only remains for a very short time in her father's house, during which time she is surrounded by her father's affection, since he knows that later on her status of wife and, above all, of daughter-in-law in another family, will not be easy for her. The mother is still above a daughter-in-law in the house, who must prove herself by her subordination to the law of her mother-in-law, her domestic capabilities,

her fertility as well as by the education she gives to her children. The mother's severity towards her daughter does not prevent the establishment of a sound and deep tie between the two; it is just that she thinks that the sooner the young girl becomes accustomed to her duties and the constant constraints involved in the life of a woman and the less she is allowed to experience another life-style, the more chance she will have of getting on with her future affines and leading a bearable life away from her father's home, where she is protected and in greatest security.

For the young girl, growing up essentially among women and identifying herself with her mother or aunts, the behaviour example set is that of a woman subordinated to elder women and to men, from whom she is almost totally separated, and condemned to lead a life of constant toil from the time she awakes until her nightly rest.

The natural exuberance of the young girl is very soon discouraged, and more and more strict self-discipline is imposed upon her day by day; a check is kept on her conversation, no jokes are tolerated about men in the family for example, and this leads to a constantly reserved attitude. A six- or seven-year old girl often keeps quite quiet in the presence of men in the family and stays at a distance, close by the other women, helping them to their work; she is both discrete and helpful.

When the grandmother recounts religious stories, she lays great emphasis on those that talk of women: first because she has a wider knowledge of such stories, and secondly, for teaching purposes.

During the girl's religious education, much is made of women's fundamental impurity. Because of her menses, one of the body's excretions, the woman is unclean for several days each month. So as not to contaminate the rest of the household, in the most orthodox groups she is confined to a hut in the garden, away from the dwelling-place; in most cases, however, she is simply kept away from the kitchen. Woman's impurity during childbirth is of the same order. Inserted into an essentially female environment, the young girl cannot help becoming very rapidly informed of all these facts. What is more, it is during this period of her childhood that she is asked to help and take part in all the domestic activities.

The young girl's social apprenticeship is not quite so constraining. It takes place at approximately the same time as that of the boy, although the boy has more freedom and spends his time outdoors. Under less supervision, corrected less, and in contact with other children, the young girl does not behave with the same reserve expected of her in the house. During this period of her life, just as later on, outdoors is always associated with relaxation: fetching water from the village well is an opportunity for the women to get together and exchange news, discuss and express themselves freely before returning to their attitude of silence with their husbands.

In this aspect too, the young girl is surrounded by the elder women and immediately finds herself part of their network of relationships. The young girls gradually draw away from the boys until they finally form two separate groups by about the time they start school.

The young girl stays closer to her house, almost always within sight, and does not rove around the entire village like her brothers. She gets together with other girls, carrying on her hip the last-born member of the family. She spends less time than boys do playing, because she has a number of chores to do around the house.

The moral, social and religious teaching, whose chief purpose it is to show boys and girls alike their place in society, is supplemented by the practical learning of household tasks and child-rearing.

A start is made on this form of learning by encouraging the girl to act out women's activities in the games she plays. When the women are cooking, she is often given kitchen utensils to play with alongside the adults, and the most straightforward operations are explained to her. She observes the daily pattern of food preparation and thereby assimilates a number of techniques and, above all, the place they occupy in the culinary system as a whole. Her experience grows quickly with the help of the adults, who encourage her to take an interest in the tasks which she will have to perform herself one day.

From being voluntary and combined with play, this form of learning takes on a mandatory character, as the girl is increasingly required to lend a hand. She often begins by accompanying the women to the well and then eventually takes their place and carries the water-jar on her head, as she has seen the women do so many times. Male children, or male adults for that matter, are never seen performing that task.

The young girl joins in all the household chores from a very early age but, earlier still, she takes charge of the younger children when the adults do not have time to look after them.

She has to pacify the fretful infant until the mother returns and can give it the breast. She soothes it, sings to it, and generally acts as if she were its mother. Later, when it is capable of responding to her invitation, she plays with it. She first assumes this responsibility in the home, under the supervision of other people, such as the grandmother but, little by little, she is allowed to take the baby out with her. It is quite common to see a four-year old girl carrying a one-year old on her hip. She eventually takes charge of the baby for the entire day and tends to all its needs and its well-being.

One of the most striking differences between the lives of boys and girls in the same age-group lies in play activities. We have already said that the greater part of the small boy's day is taken up with playing and that learning is sporadic and irregular, dispersed piecemeal as the opportunity arises. The same cannot be said of the household and child-rearing activities which the girl has to learn. These eventually take up a very large part of her day and leave for actual play activities only very clearly defined times when her help is not needed. It should be remembered, however, that learning initially forms part of playing.

The girl spends her free time outside the home with other girls. She plays with small wooden, or even plastic, figures for dolls, but these are soon replaced by a younger sibling. She plays the same kind of static and competitive games as boys, and word games involving all kinds of riddles, jokes, gossip, songs and tricks occupy an important place. Girls join with boys in attending all the village festivities and munching the same sweetmeats bought at the village stall.

By school age, the girl is perfectly socialized and has developed practical skills which are expected of boys only at a later stage since, in their case, practical know-how is bound up with farming, their father's occupation, and they are almost certain to follow in his footsteps. Her sphere of activity is centred on the inside of the home rather than the village outside, and her duties well outnumber her leisure-time activities.

III. CONCLUSION

India does not represent a special case as far as the relationship existing between the family and society is concerned. According to Mandelbaum (1972, page 43), a family is not only a reproduction and socialization unit but is also a source of the individual's link with society.

Pre-school education is made up of two clearly defined stages, depending on the child's age. During the first stage, the child is a fragile creature which can only be ministered to and cannot be asked to do anything. It needs care and affection. This period suddenly comes to an end when it is weaned. Subsequently, in the second stage, the child is supposed to be capable of understanding: it enters a period when it learns what its duties are and when its own wishes are no longer as important as the demands made of it.

It is during this second period that there starts to be a differentiation between the sexes. The same attention is devoted to both girls and boys but different things are expected of them.

The impression gained is that the first stage is meant to give the child the physical and moral strength it needs to cope with living. By ensuring that its demands are met and that it does not become distressed or frustrated, it is given a smiling picture of the world. It is the only time in the child's life when its needs are satisfied from the very moment it voices them. It is a time when its sensitivity is aroused by the repeated and varied forms of physical contact which it constantly has with the people immediately surrounding it. The child is never left alone; indeed, it would find it hard to imagine a world in which solitude existed. Having been raised from birth in an atmosphere of most affectionate promiscuity, it always associates the ideas of well-being and security with its group.

As we have already shown, the whole picture changes as soon as something is expected of the child. This is where its sex becomes relevant. There are two parallel systems of streams of education, one for girls and the other for boys, reproducing the mould of the society in which the children live and will go on living. It is a world in which men and women lead parallel lives, and the two really meet only through the shared rules for living and at certain times of the day when physical needs bring them together, whether it be to eat, to sleep, or to have sexual intercourse.

When the situation is reversed and parents instead of children begin making demands, the idea of duty emerges and that of right recedes. The disparity between the sexes is made explicit in the way in which these two principles are apportioned. Among the men, the concept of right will continue to exist alongside that of duty for a very long time, indeed throughout their lives, whereas, among the women, the concept of right will tend to disappear almost completely from early childhood.

By school age, the social being is completely formed and the family has fulfilled its role as a reproductive and socializing unit. The groundwork has been laid for the emergence of the intellectual being, in the first place by sharpening the child's responses - its physical sensitivity - but also by giving it an outlook on the world of which it has always been a fully-fledged member and with which it exchanges rights and duties. The school is a foreign body in this social environment and, as such, is regarded as being superfluous and as an element that is not essential to the setting in which the child lives, especially when it is conducted by teachers coming from outside the groups. The school will produce another type of intellectual being.

The child is not so much the offspring of a couple as one of the members of the paternal lineage in which it lives. It is cared for not by one or two people in that lineage but by all its female and male members.

The women provide verbal and practical instruction, not in a systematic and didactic manner but by pointing to examples and giving answers to the specific problems which the child has to contend with in its everyday life. The men interfere very little with that instruction but, even so, they have their part to play. In an environment such as this, where knowledge is transmitted by setting examples the attitude they adopt represents an unwavering standard for the child. Their detachment from household matters teaches the male or female child that the tasks involved are associated with the sexes and that, depending on the sex to which it belongs, life-styles differ: the sphere of activity lying outside the home is the preserve of menfolk, who enjoy the respect shown towards them by the women tied down for their part, to household duties, procreation and child-rearing.

Everybody has a role to play in the education of the pre-school age child: on the one hand the women, and overwhelmingly the mother and grandmother, on account of their proximity and on the other, the men by virtue of the distance separating them from the child. The least that can be said is that the roles are quite clearcut and that there is no way in which the child can confuse them. It will be either a father or a mother, neither more nor less. At all events, it will not be an individual so much as a unit in a group, where one unit cannot be dissociated from the next, where they all draw strength and power from each other by belonging to a group in the midst of other interacting groups.

The child is not misled by the crowded environment in which it lives right from the time it is born. It is one among millions, all linked together in multiple interacting chains. The balance can only be maintained if, indeed, the family plays its proper role as a socializing unit and rules out any risk of the chains being broken through rebellion, in other words through a display of individualism on the part of the child. It is not taught to distinguish itself by being particularly competent in any special discipline. On the contrary, it is taught to reproduce as faithfully as possible the examples that have been set before it since it was born.

The school is the specific setting for the development of intelligence and imaginative ability, but the new learning processes are introduced at too late a stage for the existence of the group to be jeopardized. It has to be borne in mind that, although the school age has been lowered, families seldom comply with it at the present time and that, rather than send their children to nursery school, they start them only at the (compulsory) primary level at the age of six to seven years, by which time they are already thoroughly socialized.

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THE CHILD IN THE MAGHREB

In Maghrebian society, children are considered as the greatest of riches. It is by the number of his descendants, especially sons, that a man increases his prestige, his power and his honour. A woman does not acquire status and a respectable position in the society until she is the mother of a large progeny. Furthermore, in North African families, the child is always wanted and is received as a blessing of God. This explains, in part, the high birth rate in these countries.

Even though schooling is now widespread for both girls and boys, kindergartens are still rare, and most children remain with their families until admitted to primary school at about six years of age. The education they receive in the family, during a period when its influence has not yet been affected by the school, is the subject of this study.

The study is based on personal observations made during many visits to Algeria, especially during the summer of 1979. Frequent contacts with immigrant North Africans living in the Paris region have also enabled us to know their culture better. Bibliographies on the subject have been consulted in order to supplement our information or to make comparisons.

An outline of the social environment in which the young child lives is followed by an examination of education itself. Many variables come into play and these must be taken into account:

the sex of the child: boys and girls are not treated in the same manner;

age: attitudes change according to the stages of the child's growth and attainments;

members of the family: depending on sex and the relationship between family members and the child, the role they play and their contact with the child are very different;

spheres of education:

food

hygiene and bodily functions

mastery of movement

speech

play

social values, good manners

etc.;

the social level and life-style of the family.

Finally, one important factor poses a methodological problem: traditional education is indissociable from the social, economic and cultural context in which it occurs and this context is currently changing. The present evolution of the North African countries involves the destruction of most of the ancient structures, creates new ways of life, and modifies relationships among individuals. Children are both the witnesses of and the actors in these changes.

The force of these transformations, the impact of the West, and new ideas make a much greater impression in the cities than in the country areas where traditions continue to predominate.

This study does not seek to draw rigid distinctions between the two educational systems, "traditional" or "rural" and "modern" or "urban". To treat them separately would be to deform the reality, which is infinitely varied. There are a thousand-and-one ways of incorporating the old and the new, and the most widespread learning process is the transitional system where the two concepts come together or interlink.

For the sake of convenience, we shall take traditional education as a basis, indicating where possible and necessary, the differences which may exist in different surroundings. The best method would seem to be to give the age factor priority over the other elements and hence to adopt a chronological plan.

I. THE FAMILY ENVIRONMENT

In the Maghreb, the traditional family is patrilinear and patrilocal. A man, his wife or wives,⁽¹⁾ and their sons, with their wives and their children as well as the non-married daughters, generally live in the same place (house, group of houses or tent). Hence, quite a large number of people live together. Male predominance is absolute. The father is the master of the house and everyone is answerable to him. The structure is based on a clear division between men and women at all levels. Work, such as the arranging of feasts or the allotting of space, is subject to this basic division which determines all attitudes.

The duties of women are those which concern the house itself: housework, cooking, fetching water, washing, care of the children. Other activities generally reserved for them include: weaving, pottery, sewing, embroidery, basket-making.

Men work outside, in the fields or at trade. They spend their spare time away from the house - in a café, for example. They only go home to eat and sleep. In fact, the dwelling of which they are the masters does not really belong to them, they do not feel at ease in it, it is the domain of the women. This difference is one of the characteristics of the Maghrebien society, the notion of femininity can be associated with indoors, shadow and hiding-places, while masculinity evokes outdoors, light, and the visible world.

As already mentioned, the education of children is entrusted solely to the women. For boys, this means until their sixth, seventh or eighth year when the ritual of circumcision marks their entry into the adult world. Girls, however, always remain in the same group. In short, children up to the age of six mainly grow up in a feminine environment.

It will be useful to dwell a little on this environment and especially on the situation of women. Traditionally, they are married very young, sometimes at puberty and, therefore, become mothers very early. Nowadays, however, marriages tend to take place somewhat later (generally about 18 years of age).

The young wife must get used to a new home and live with unknown people and a husband who, in most cases, she has never seen before the marriage. She is anxious to be well liked and, hence, tries to present herself as discreet, hard working and submissive to the wishes and whims of her husband. He has the right to divorce her at any time, simply by pronouncing the appropriate formula three times in front of witnesses. The children will then remain with their father.

In order to place this situation in its social context and to avoid all hasty judgements, we must remember the principles governing marriage in Maghrebien society. Marriage is not the consequence of mutual attraction between two individuals, nor is it of their own choosing. It is the means by which two families join together and reinforce their power, their wealth, and their system of mutual help. The woman is at the centre of the exchanges, material or symbolic.

The family who takes a bride for its son does not look for a particular personality, but rather a woman capable of accomplishing feminine roles: housework and, above all, reproduction. The children, in fact, are an asset belonging to the lineage of the husband which the girl's family tries to provide at the same time as the girl herself. Her genetic and reproductive capacities are what matter, and without them she is a useless burden on her husband's family.

The woman seems to be caught in a situation of dependence and inferiority, as well as of insecurity. She only begins to strengthen her position and to win some respect with the birth of her children, especially a son. And it is only when she gets older, when her sons are married, that, as a mother-in-law, she really becomes the mistress of her house. There is close contact between the children and their mother, the latter finding in her offspring, on the one hand the means towards accession to a respectable status, and on the other hand, individuals to whom she can pour out her feelings.

G. Tillon states that: "In all countries, children are highly influenced by their mother, but those of veiled women come under their mother's influence much more, because, during the first years of their life, which are the most important, they are brought up exclusively by her; besides, the mother belongs so totally to her child that the tie between them does not break and the child remains dangerously submissive".⁽²⁾

(1) Polygamy is permitted but is now rare.

(2) Le harem and the cousins (Paris, Le Seuil, 1966), p. 20.

As to the father, the child sees him very little since he is rarely at home. During his brief appearances, he shows himself cold and authoritarian and the atmosphere in the women's camp helps to create a distant and omnipotent image of him, which calls for awe and respect.

On the other hand, in the large family, the number of women displaying great affection, the care of sisters and cousins, and the presence of companions of his own age provide the small child with a reassuring and protective image of the family.

In the urban environment, however, the family is smaller very often being limited to the couple and their children.⁽¹⁾ In this case the influence of the husband's parents is weakened. Women marry later and sometimes work outside the home. There are fewer differences between the masculine and feminine roles, and the father is closer to his children. He likes to stay at home and play with the small ones. He is less distant and this has probably minimized the prevalence of the old values of absolute respect and obedience to the paternal power.

II. EDUCATION

II.1 Birth

The welcome extended to the baby, according to sex, is significant and foreshadows the future. The birth of a boy is a source of great joy, while that of a girl is treated with indifference, if not with dismay. This is especially noticeable in rural areas. Here is what G. Hardy and L. Brunot said about Morocco in 1925: "If it is a boy, he is named Mbarek until the baptismal sheep has been killed and women utter long 'youyous'; if it is a girl, she is named Mbarka and joy is limited while in some places the event is summed up by saying 'the kitchen has collapsed on the father ...'. If in the country areas, the disappointment of having a girl is sincere, it is not the same in the cities; there is a great affection in the town-dweller's attitude towards the birth of a girl; moreover, common courtesy on such occasions has given rise to a series of consoling formulas or encouraging aphorisms" (page 19).

On the other hand, here is what A. Ouitis reports about a region of Algeria. His book was published in 1977, and it will be seen that nothing has changed: "The birth of a girl is never desired in the Setifois rural society where the Kabyle influence prevails. Every time a girl is born into a family, a popular saying proclaims 'gloom overshadows the house, everything is cold' while, on the contrary, if it is a boy 'the house is bursting with joy, even the wooden beams are joyful'. At Mansourah, for example, the birth of a boy is announced to the whole community by the 'youyous' of women and three gunshots fired either by the grandfather or by the father. When it is a girl it is indeed a matter of shame for her family".⁽²⁾

I have seen the paternal grandmother of a one-month old girl, while playing with her and coaxing her affectionately, give her small slaps on the cheek saying: "I beat her so that she may die, because she is a girl".

It is in this way that, from birth, the destiny of each child is decided according to sex. But it must be emphasized that in many families nowadays, especially in cities, girls are very often received with as much joy as sons, and sometimes even actively wanted.

II.2 The baby

The life of the new-born child and that of babies up to the age of one year is characterized by extreme closeness to, and a deep intimacy with the mother. She takes care of him as a priority and hardly ever leaves him alone. We must remember that it is thanks to this child that her importance increases in the husband's family, and that the child is the only one to whom she can pour out her feelings and by whom she feels she is loved.

In several regions (Kabylia, for instance), the baby is carried, wrapped in a scarf, on the back of the mother or of another woman or by a small girl; therefore he "takes part" in all activities. When not carried, he lies on a blanket or sheepskin. The use of a cradle is rare, except in cities.

(1) The number of children is decreasing as many young couples do not want a large family and now practise birth control.

(2) A. Ouitis "The social contradictions and their symbolic expression in Setifois" (SNEO, Alger, 1977, 125 p.), p. 61.

As a principle, the child is not allowed to cry. As soon as he cries, the mother hurries to breast-feed him, fondles him, speaks to him or sings improvised lullabies. He is not left alone but accompanies her wherever she goes.

The baby is generally completely swaddled in napkins which are tied by a piece of cloth across different parts of the body. This prevents him from moving and is designed to prevent deformities. He is freed from time to time in order to be changed or washed. Apart from washing (which does not necessarily take place daily), he is given "beauty treatments": his nose is pulled so that it will grow straight, his hair is coloured with henna, kohl is applied to his eyes. He also receives a daily massage with olive oil. All these practices have a therapeutic or prophylactic as well as an ornamental value.

Children's diseases are traditionally treated with medicines involving magic. They have been described by several authors (J. Desparmet, N. Zerdoumi, G. Hardy and L. Brunot) and need not be described in detail here. Nowadays, in any case, people of all classes will call a doctor. Though most of the necessary tasks are performed by the baby's mother, occasionally other women take care of him. In particular his sisters between eight and ten years old are often responsible for taking him for a walk, carrying him, keeping him busy, or quietening him when the mother is not free. Sometimes another woman will feed him. Sisters-in-law with small babies, for example, can feed both babies without distinction. Such children, when grown up, cannot get married to each other, even if they are not related since sexual intercourse between persons who, as children, had the same wet-nurse, is forbidden.

In daily life, sisters, aunts, cousins and grandmothers stay close to the small child. During the earliest days, when he is still very frail, he is not shown to strangers for fear of the "evil eye". In fact it is thought that the glance of an old, sterile or jealous woman, especially if she loudly praises the child, may jeopardize his health and even put his life in danger.

Everyone experiences this fear on his own account and still more intensely where babies are concerned. Young children are, therefore, surrounded with protection against the "ain" (evil eye). As we have already said, the obvious way to avoid this risk is to hide the baby. In some regions of the south, in order not to counter any destructive influence, the baby is kept dirty and his face is smeared with dust to make him look ugly. Everywhere, deterrant objects, particularly of iron, are put beside the child's bed to keep the "jnoun" away. When he is a few weeks old and begins to be shown to others, a small replica of a hand is pinned to his cloth: the hamsaé which is the main protection against the "ain" or another object with the same property. If, in spite of these precautions, the baby still cries a lot, it is thought that he is affected by the "evil eye" and, in order to cure him, a small ritual must be performed, which consists of tracing seven circles around him with a handful of salt. This is called "tesbei el melh" (doing seven circles with salt).

Weaning

Weaning occurs at different ages, depending on the mothers, the children and the particular conditions. Traditionally, it takes place as late as three or four years. Mention must be made here of the widespread belief that, as long as a woman breast-feeds, she cannot become pregnant (in order to avoid a new pregnancy, weaning is delayed). Often, however, it is because the mother is pregnant again that she decides to wean her baby. When this latter situation occurs, the shock is hard for the baby who finds himself brutally ousted by the new-born child.

The usual method of weaning consists of smearing the breast with tar, resin or some other bitter product. The bottle is increasingly used by all classes, sometimes under unhygienic conditions, either at the same time or instead of breast-feeding.

In families which are breaking away from tradition, the life of the baby is different: he sleeps in a cradle, is not swaddled and can move freely, and is sometimes left to cry a little in an attempt to encourage regular habits, although this remains rare. When the mother is employed, the child has less exclusive relations with her and is looked after by somebody else. He is also weaned earlier. He is clean and hygienic principles are learnt and put into practice. Most of the ancient remedies have been abandoned in favour of Western medicine. However, some practices such as the olive oil massage are still greatly valued and protection against the "evil eye" still persists.

II.3 Early progress (one- to three-years old)

At about one year of age, the child starts to walk and at about two years to talk. He walks for the first time, helped by his relatives, without any method or special equipment. He begins

by crawling then stands up by leaning on furniture, against walls or the legs of adults and, little by little, learns to move about by himself. His elder sister is often responsible for helping him and for taking him out for walks. A traditional house is sparsely furnished, has only a ground floor and there are fewer forbidden places and dangerous objects than in a modern flat where supervision is necessary. Thus the young child explores the home and starts uttering the names of people or things, asking, refusing and communicating through words. For this, he uses a childish language made up of simple words (mostly double syllables).

At this period, he also starts having meals with the rest of the household. Special food may be prepared for him (mashed vegetables, milk rice, semolina-based pap, mashed bananas, nuts with honey ...) or he may partake of the common meal. Traditionally, men eat first, the women and children sit on the floor in another room and share a dish. The smallest child is also allowed to drink tea which is poured from one glass into another to cool it, and later on with his brothers and sisters. In any case, they are never left alone.

The regulation of bodily functions is not a matter of great concern. The mother has, in this regard, a rather passive attitude, waiting for her child to learn to speak and to acquire habits of cleanliness by himself. He is not punished when he shows lack of control and he can urinate anywhere.

A child who can walk and begins to talk is generally welcomed by everybody. He comes and goes with great freedom, going from one to another, playing with everyone (fathers sometimes enjoy looking after children at this age, teasing them or going for walks with them), taking part in every activity. When he becomes clumsy and troublesome he is ordered to go away, but very often adults get tired after two or three warnings without any result and the naughty child will finally do what he wants. His whims are nearly always satisfied, people yielding to his cajolery or cries.

To quieten him down, interest him, make him laugh and teach him how to talk, various songs are sung to him. The following are translations of some of these:

Oh an egg, oh an egg!
Here is the hen which laid an egg.
This one found it,
That one boiled it,
This one took out the shell,
That one ate it,
and that one said: "give me a bit or I'll tell mummy, she will spank you"
tic, tic, tic, tic,
And what about the calves?
They are in the bean field or in the wood.

This is accompanied by the following actions: someone holds the baby's hand and draws a circle in his palm with one finger while reciting the first line and taps the palm during the second one. Each of his fingers is folded over as the recital continues. When the fist is clenched, the grown-up moves his fingers up to the child's arm and on reaching the armpit, asks the question, the child answers and the adult tickles him.

There is another verse on the same pattern:

Oh an egg, oh an egg!
Here the hen laid an egg.
This one is the smallest, poor one (little finger)
This one is the knife's brother (the ring finger)
This one is tall but does not do anything (long finger)
This one licks the small wooden dish (forefinger)
This was swats the ant (thumb).

The tickling may be accompanied by the lines:

Here, here, here,
A stone, rain is falling,
The male partridge came to drink
The female partridge did "fret fret" (while flying away).

These songs are enjoyed by children up to the age of three: they learn to say them themselves and never tire of hearing them, laughing in anticipation of the final tickling.

Such games are great educational aims: they help the child's development by making him aware of his body: through contacts with others he learns to differentiate his sensations, to recognize the parts of his hand, the palm, each finger separately, then the arm and the armpit. He also experiences different sorts of touch, because the adults pat him, draw circles in his palm, take his fingers, imitate a walk along his arm and tickle him.

On the other hand, these songs enrich his language, help him to count, help him to imagine daily life scenes and teach him everyday gestures because they are sometimes mimed. Therefore, these games create a close and enriching contact between the little one and the person with whom he is in physical and verbal contact.

II.4 Individualization (from three to six years)

From the age of three to four, the child begins to be a little more independent, spending time with people other than his mother and sisters. In particular, he discovers the street. This is especially important for boys who, little by little, get used to spending the day outside with children of their own age. They slowly begin to live the life of a man. It is at this period that the activities of boys and of girls become distinctly different, and we must study them separately.

II.5 Boys' activities

Boys become progressively aware of the fact that they are young men and tend to adopt "virile" attitudes, corresponding to a certain social image. The value of this image induces them to conform to it and therefore to move away from the female universe where they still live. In the street, they meet among themselves and acquire yet another kind of education: that given by their fellows. This certainly involves information but also rivalry, competition and the learning of group life, solidarity and relationships with individuals who are no longer protectors and who must sometimes be faced with only one's own strength to rely on. Various games are played:

stationary games: these require only bottle-tops or apricot stones and the rules vary rather like draughts, marbles or knucklebones;

moving games: the two main games are on the theme of cars. The children make these themselves. The first is very simple: it consists of a small wheel or hoop and a rather stiff, long wire with its end bent into a Z, keeping the wheel upright. The child holds the wire and runs zig-zagily while pushing his hoop;

the second one is more elaborate: it is a kind of carriage with three or four wheels, the two rear ones fixed and the two front ones having a simple steering system. This toy is very popular and children race it down the steep streets, alone or accompanied. The foot is used as a brake.

In summer, for those who are lucky enough to live by a river, an open canal, the sea or a fountain, the main activity is bathing and playing in water.

Young boys then enjoy great freedom, are not supervised by anyone and have to observe only a few restrictions. If they are sometimes asked to do some shopping, they are not obliged to do any housework.

II.6 Girls' activities

The little girl, unlike her brother, starts early to learn her duties and her role as housewife. She stays with the womenfolk and participates in all their tasks, and her involvement soon becomes important. She starts her household training by playing with a miniature doll's dinner set. Sometimes, she helps in cooking, goes with her mother to fetch water that she carries in a small can on the head or by hand. She owns a rag doll, which is not prohibited by Islam even though it is a human representation. Her games are nearly always imitative of adult activities. She may also play in the street but without going far away.

III. SOCIAL FRAMEWORK OF EDUCATION

III.1 Singing and dancing

Even before walking, babies begin to "dance" while sitting down when they hear some music or when somebody sings for them. This is due to the great importance that music and

dancing have in Maghreb, especially for women. Festivals are numerous and young children attend them with their mothers. They take great pleasure in an atmosphere made up of sounds, rhythms and movement. They can also, if they feel like it, show their talents as dancers. They are sometimes encouraged to do so and adults watch them with amusement and interest. Little girls may play the "derbouka".⁽¹⁾

It is, therefore, at a very young age that children learn dancing and singing. At the age of five or six, they are sometimes already well trained and display real talent in these arts. In the streets, small groups of boys and girls are frequently encountered: one of them may be tapping out a rhythm on a "derbouka" or a can while others sing and clap their hands. Dancing is reserved for less public places and is practised especially by little girls among themselves within the house.

III.2 Relations with others

At this period of the child's life, between three and six years of age, some changes occur in his contact with his surrounding and family. Boys, in particular, become aware of "themselves" and strive to be accepted as individuals, to impose their personality, to become independent. The social characteristics of masculinity and femininity are observed, and the child learns to respect them and fit himself to this pattern. Moreover, he is now considered as capable of understanding and must comply with the rules and receive sanctions, punishment or reward. People are more exacting towards him and he is expected to integrate into the values of his own society and comply with them. But then a serious problem can often occur: namely, the birth of a brother or sister which breaks the privileged relation he has so far had with his mother and diverts general attention away from him. This results in crises, such as attempts to recapture attention, more or less direct acts of hostility towards the usurper and regression to baby habits (such as bed-wetting). These reactions are, by the way, not unique to the Maghrebian world and are those generally associated everywhere with weaning and the arrival of a new baby in the house.

Adults seldom try to do anything about the causes of this problem. On the contrary, they often arouse the jealousy of the eldest by showing more interest in the younger, without concealing their preferences and comparing the children in front of them. The remedies used involve magic. N. Zerdoumi quotes this one, a classic in the country of Tlemcen: "As many lumps of sugar as there are brothers and sisters are put in the baby's hand. The children are called one by one and are asked to take from the baby the sugar that they then have to swallow immediately. This symbolizes the sweetness which must characterize their future relations".

Another case of jealousy must be mentioned: that of girls towards their brothers in cases where parents have a strong preference for boys. Favouritism is common in families, above all towards the eldest or the youngest. An elder sister often takes care of the child, like a second mother, when his place near the mother has been taken by the new-born. The grandmother can also take care of him, removing him for a time from his parents and the new baby and keeping him at her home.

We have mentioned the marked difference in the treatment received by brothers and sisters. In traditional society as soon as they are able to understand, boys and girls cease to be educated in the same way. The boy is free, less restrained and rather encouraged to show himself strong, authoritative and violent. He quickly becomes a kind of small dictator, particularly with his sisters.

Conversely, the girl learns to obey, to work, to be submissive to everyone, to accept blows from her brothers without complaint and above all without returning them, and to do all the things the others are unwilling to do. M. Kacha observes in this connection that: "the girl is taken away very early from the play area: from the age of five to six, she starts the apprenticeship to her role as a woman. The girl learns from the elders the virtues that a woman should possess. She gets used very early to suffer the raggings without flinching. The whole family, especially the women, encourage the boys to show their authority over sisters and, in the case of revolt, family punishment comes quickly. Little by little, the young girl learns to suffer everything without complaining. Moreover, she will be all her life submitted to privations" (page 15).

(1) "Derbouka": a long Arabic tambourine made out of baked clay.

In many families nowadays, these differences are being greatly reduced. Girls are not so repressed, they are allowed to blossom and to resist ill-treatment from their brothers. However, as a general rule, the difference of treatment is still flagrant.

III.3 Educational methods

For the majority of children, knowledge is acquired through imitation. They gradually learn gestures, attitudes and behaviour by watching life around them. At the same time, they are fed with old sayings, proverbs and tales which are used as moral precepts. They are inundated with examples chosen from lives of great men of the past or even those set by the neighbour's sons. Through small games, they are made to understand what is expected from them. Here are two symbolical methods: if during the meal, there is some chicken, the heart is never given to the child. He is told that it would make him timid. He is also forbidden to break eggs, because he could become like their shell, not able to return the blows he gets. The child accepts these small privations very well as he feels them to be a mark of interest; in this manner, the ideas of courage and revenge are assimilated. At the same time, he understands the "magic" connection linking an action to a consequence. This very common kind of reasoning becomes one of the fundamental bases of child and adult psychology.

The "don'ts" are numerous, and the young Maghrebien must learn to find out by himself the difference between the "musts" and "must nots" which form the structure of social life and its rituals. But he is helped by the fact that nothing is hidden from him, he takes part in all adult activities and finds out very early the realities of life. He attends weddings, circumcisions, childbirth. He goes to the "hamman" with women, of which G. Hardy and L. Brunot have said, with a pejorative and shocked attitude typical of their time: "children go to the public bath, which costs little, quite often with their mothers, before the age of eight or ten. They witness and hear some things strangely educative" (page 38).

It must be emphasized that, beyond this age, boys do not have access any more to the feminine world, they will go to the men's bath. Only the memories of childhood will remain to be judged, imagined or dreamed about. This factor is certainly of prime importance in the formation of the adult male psychology.

Children are very early given some small responsibilities such as shopping, taking care of a younger brother or an animal, fetching or carrying messages... When children show themselves to be reticent and not willing to respond to the tokens of trust and affection, several methods of reprimand may be used: scoffing, humiliation: most often in public, affecting the child's sense of honour and self-esteem, so highly valued in this society.

Threats: either verbal or in the form of gestures: to pull down the lower eyelid means "take care, I see you", to hold one's chin means "if I catch you", to raise one's hand indicates a spanking.

Shouts, insults, curses.

Blows: in serious cases, it is the father who intervenes with unrestrained violence - a reaction of impulse and not premeditation. The mother or grandmother tries to defend the child which always manages to find someone to comfort him. A method used when all the others have proved ineffective and when the child is obstinately undisciplined: he is taken to a marabout who tries to cure him by using magic.

In general, it is the mother who is in contact with the child and uses these methods. The father, as we have seen, only rarely intervenes in matters of education. He arouses fear and his sons and daughters must show him respect and obedience. When he is present, they lower their eyes, obey without question his decisions and do not talk. The stamp of his authority will remain with them all their lives.

CONCLUSION

The child brought up in the traditional way lives with women until his admission to school. He leads a free life among them and feels supported and protected. He very quickly learns in his own mind to separate the family, warm and solid, from the world outside where only attacks and wrongdoing are to be expected. Within his family, he finds the shelter he can always rely on.

On the other hand, he is not confined within a specific universe. He lives with adults, attends and takes part in all activities. Very soon, he has a role as an actor in society and this role evolves with his age. The world of the child is not isolated; childhood is a time of life

when he learns little by little to behave like an adult. This is the first aim of education, and generally very well understood; the freedom engaged by boys gives them an idea of importance and rights, whereas the duties which girls must assume very early on teach them hard work and obedience. The idea of an independent childhood no more exists than the idea of education as a separate world. Thus, as we have seen, our work is linked to all the social and cultural aspects of life, to the roles of individuals, to spoken literature, religion, the use of the body in different ways such as dancing, work, contact with others, etc. The Koranic master, who is in charge of teaching children to learn the Koran by heart, is the only real educator, as defined by the traditional society. Henceforth, the intervention of the school certainly brings some changes to the problem, and the place of education is modified, due to social changes.

The present evolution, which includes rural depopulation, adoption of urban ways of life, the breaking up of ancient family structures and values, also influences the education of children. They grow up in a restricted family, where the father is present more often and closer to them. Television, car trips, going out with the mother and the schooling of elder brothers and sisters permit the child to know more about a larger world. This familiarization with the outside world tends to reduce the gap mentioned above, between the family and outsiders, and this helps to destroy one of the fundamental values of the Maghrebian society: self-reliance and endogamy.

One particularly striking phenomenon should be noted. Even though the strong influence of women upon children's education is an element of conservatism and opposition to progress (especially due to their own inferior situation), the present changes which increase the father's role, are also criticized mainly for inculcation ideas of male domination in children.

Through time and changes, childhood remains childhood. It is probable that future Maghrebian parents, like their forebears, will understand the irony of the old Fassi⁽¹⁾ saying: "He who raises children follows a calling as cheerful as that of one who would pound water in a mortar".

(1) Fassi: from Fez.

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TENTATIVE SYNTHESIS

Standard practice has it that the subject of a study should always be situated in its physical, social and human context; we have thus presented a childhood existence and the education undergone in the social and cultural setting of Africa, the Maghreb and India. However, the comparative approach used here has enabled us in a more or less explicit way to identify sufficiently important similarities between these three cases, to lead us to consider the common characteristics of the three globally and, where necessary, to contrast them with modern-day conceptions and practices with regard to the education of the child of pre-school age.

1. It is a fact that the distances between the three geographical regions under study have not led to any notable differences as regards the way in which children are viewed, particularly young children. These representations are of various orders and a number of theories have been applied to the social or cultural factors which determine them. First, there is the question of the child seen as an adult-to-be: this point of view is naturally not the result of experiment, but is merely the observation of an evolutionary phenomenon based on physical and psychomotor development, namely that of the ability to conceive and carry through actions. Associated with these developments of the body and mind are rights which authorize or forbid certain behaviour and attitudes. It is by combining these two systems of reference and on the basis of a normative scale that societies and cultures set the period of childhood as opposed to the subsequent period corresponding to adulthood.

Yet, if mankind concurs in acknowledging biological childhood as attested by the objective state of the being, it is most definitely at the level of attitudes, i.e. cultural standards, that the concept of childhood acquires some relevance since it is at this level that the variations bound up with cultural differences and historical circumstances within a single society are revealed.

African, the Maghrebian or Indian societies characterized by oral tradition, where civilization had to be established, the terms of the present study make it necessary to point out that social structure, rather than the presence or absence of writing, is the real factor behind the representation given to childhood.

It is a fact that in lineal societies, action comes more from the group than the individual, and it has been seen that the marriage of a man and a woman has meaning only to the extent that it is seen as the expression of the alliance between the two lineal groups which the spouses respectively represent. Thus, the fundamental stake of such an alliance is the appropriation by the group of the children born of the marriage. In patrilineal societies, the lineage which discharges its bride-price obligations automatically acquires, through this, the paternity of the children. In societies based on maternal filiation, the husband gives over his children to his brother-in-law and in return receives his sister's children. These two procedures are used in all three cultural areas under study; they are unaware of the concept of family in its current acceptation and on the contrary recognize and give prominence to the kinship relationship which ties one individual to another sometimes far removed in the genealogical system.

In this type of society where unity and cohesion stem from reference to a common ancestor, the child does not constitute an autonomous, individual entity with its genitors, but rather appears as a new element in the line of descent of that ancestor. This is in clear contrast to what can be observed in the Western world, and also explains why the major concern of the parental community is to recognize the child as a full member of its stock implying, for the child, a duty to conform to custom and, for the community, total collective responsibility for the child and its education.

This community is divided into two fractions, one paternal and the other maternal, each containing categories of age and sex: the parental universe of the child contains a subgroup of women - its own mother, the other women in her age set or the one immediately above; a subgroup of men, including its own father, the members of his age set or the preceding set; immediately below; and finally, a subgroup of collaterals (siblings and cousins of the paternal or maternal stock). Each of these subgroups concerns itself with the education of the small child, either at a given stage in its development or in a given area of its education; however, this distribution of tasks is in no way rigid: not only is there interchangeability of the educators, but furthermore the educational action assigned to a particular subgroup can and should be taken over by another: this permutability of operatives and distribution of work, moreover, represents the only form of control there is over the transmission methods and content of the knowledge acquired.

Until weaning - which normally comes about between the second and third years - the subgroup most directly involved with the child is that of the women, helped by that of the collaterals (siblings between four and six years of age). It should be remembered that in this context the mother does not occupy any preponderant position; apart from the fact that she breast-feeds her child and that in this way a special, privileged contact is established between mother and child, there are no tasks particularly reserved for her in her capacity as mother. It is known that if circumstances so require, any woman other than the mother is entitled and indeed encouraged to breast-feed the suckling child.

2. The characteristic feature of the relationship between the child and this female environment is the continuity of physical contact, the body-to-body ties between the child and its mother brought to light by J. Rabain as regards tropical Africa. The small child is rarely left alone, being constantly carried and handed from one mother's arms to another's or to those of a grandmother or a young sister. In this way, the mother-child relationship does not pass through any form of object (for instance, a toy) that could shut the child up for an indefinite length of time in the closed space of a cradle or play-pen. Clinging to the body of a mother, the child goes everywhere with her; through observation and the stimulation of its senses, it takes part in everything that appears or occurs. Furthermore, everything goes by for it in almost total peace of mind, in an atmosphere dominated by the sensation of pleasure: the motherly breast is constantly at its disposal and it is the child alone who sets the times during which it is asleep, awake or cared for. During this period, from 0 to approximately three years of age, the parental environment seeks above all to give the child a feeling of total security and establish the bases for the self-confidence that it will later be required to display. It is to this climate of security and the permissive attitude of the female relatives that psychologists attribute the psychomotor precociousness of the African, Maghrebian and Indian child: it is a fact that the child is an early walker, teethes relatively early, and at a very early age is encouraged to practise the bodily techniques it sees being used around it. These bodily techniques do however represent a quite different language from that to which the spoken word gives access. In all three regions, it has been noted that verbal exchanges are used less frequently than elsewhere between the infant and the women around it: this is because the African, Indian and Maghrebian have none of them created a special metalanguage to communicate with small children who are still incapable of correctly articulating words and giving them their full meaning. When he addresses the child, the adult uses the standard term; the lack of an answer undoubtedly leads to less dialogue, but that is only a temporary setback to be overcome; during this time, the child is recording the proper term, the appropriate intonation and the true meaning once and for all, and when the time comes, it will master the language with all desirable fluency.

This practice is to be seen generally in societies of oral tradition or those where the written word does not totally dominate the domain of speech; the observations in the present study confirm a fact that has already been recounted in ethnological works: to the extent that the spoken word does not come to the help of technical learning, it is similarly absent in the learning of the spoken language itself. Exchanges between child and adult take place, therefore, through other channels, mainly mime and gesture.

It is moreover in this form of communication that the presence of slightly older siblings proves useful, since they are more at ease in their movements yet at the same time still close to the infant child, and therefore serve as immediate models; they are the ones who initiate the child in various types of gestural games (movements of the limbs or the whole body, handling of objects), and it is often with them that the small child discovers certain things that are as yet unknown to him; these children between the ages of three and six are the ones who put together the toys the younger sibling plays with as it pleases. Finally, this group of children often takes over complete responsibility for the child, frequently in the form of a game and at times, too, as a favour to the adults. Actually, this formula does not give a true account of the real situation as we have already pointed out, the social space is not split up into a number of zones reserved either for adults or for children: in fact the care that is taken of small children by the group of older collaterals is one of the activities that form part of the solidarity felt by all those who live their lives together. As L. V. Thomas so rightly noted in relation to Africa: "In reality, the child belongs to the same social structure as the adult, participates in the same tasks - on the basis of the division of roles, by sex or caste, of course, and of its physiological capabilities - defends the same class, village or family interests, pursues the same goals, experiences the same emotions and believes in the same values. Children's play, for example, is an introduction to serious work, in exactly the same way as the rhythmic, chanting and often competitive work of adults retains something of a game".⁽¹⁾ Thus, the

(1) L. V. Thomas. *Education traditionnelle et éducation moderne en Afrique noire. L'exemple du Sénégal, in Transformations et difficultés actuelles des relations et de l'éducation familiales dans les différents pays* (Congress of the International Federation of Parent Education, Brussels, Ministry of Education, 1965), pp. 41-70.

six-year old sister who feeds and washes her two- or three-year old younger brother, plays with him and puts him to bed, is only reproducing at an earlier age the gestures of the women around her: at the same time as she is playing in the present she is projecting herself into the future and gaining practice in the roles she will then be required to perform. It can be said that at that age, an education is received in the first place by educating others.

3. Once the child has been weaned, projected from its mother's body into a social space whose limits it is not yet capable of gauging, and permanently integrated into the peer group, it begins personal and direct exploration of the physical and human universe which hitherto it has only been able to observe. At the preceding stage, the child's environment attempted to make it aware of things; now, it must be made to feel that awareness. Most of the time, the child lives outdoors with its play-mates of the same age, rather than indoors with its mother. Made to fend for itself rather than succumbing to the constant care and attention of adults, it experiences its existence to the full as it comes into contact with the earth and vegetation from which it draws material to make its toys; it learns to swim by itself because it is left on its own in the water; it contrives to pray, unbeknown to its parents, because it already believes; the small, six-year old Indian girl puts make-up on her face and sets her hair because she is already conscious of her womanhood.

It is a fact that this so-called pre-initiation period is the time when the social differentiation between sexes and ages is built up, and is therefore also the period when the child enters the world of rules, essentially behavioural rules. It is indeed the period when the male subgroup first intervenes directly in the education of the child, particularly the men of its father's and grandfather's generations, i.e. generations that are respectively adjacent to and once-removed from that of the child. This child-father-grandfather trio is functional: the father is responsible for handing down to his son the law (and all the attendant authority), but the grandfather not only takes part in this teaching of the law, but also has the role of tempering the shock that is caused by the meeting of the two adjacent generations and thereby, moreover, keeping a check on the knowledge handed down by the father. The female triad works by the same rules. As a whole, the grandparents maintain a close relationship with their grandchildren, and this helps to attenuate the hostility characteristic of the relationship between two successive generations.

In tropical Africa, India and the Maghreb, the child of pre-school age is already a member of his society, and entitled to explore all of its levels. He is from the beginning at the centre of it, even when he has not been socially recognized as of age. In these societies, participation in social life is not dependent on the child's actual age and on the ritual which marks the coming-of-age: in this aspect, these societies differ quite distinctly from the classical Western world where individual social majority as laid down by legislation reflects, *inter alia*, the point from which society recognizes the individual as an autonomous, responsible being. This difference in outlook clearly illustrates how the education of the child is designed on the basis of the way the latter is represented and on his position in society.

The form of education practised in Africa, India and the Maghreb has a certain number of characteristics.⁽¹⁾

(a) We have seen that it is the work of the village community, composed basically of relatives; from this point of view, the education given never takes the form of specific activities, but rather extends over set periods of time during which the child and its educators are almost exclusively taken up with it. It does not take on the didactic form. On the contrary, learning in whatever field it may be merges with the acts of daily life which always have significance, meaning and purposefulness. It is not totally removed from the purpose and circumstances which invest with meaning acts performed with a view to acquiring knowledge. These various characteristics are interconnected by the same underlying logic; the same fabric of everyday experience serves as a clearing-house for knowledge and as a place for producing acts experienced simultaneously as a game and as an effort in the collective interest. This is what explains the absence of didactics as such. The child singing or hearing the Algerian cradle-song is collecting together a certain number of relationships, facts and things without having at his side an adult assigned the specific function of teacher. Setting into operation the child's own skills is always a socially productive and useful act, and therefore of sufficient interest to him; in such conditions, learning never becomes artificial or tiresome.

(b) Taken in this context - and the one is the result of the other - the child's participation in the various activities of home and village life seems to be the necessary condition for his early integration into society and the development of his intellectual abilities and manual dexterity. This implies a certain type of relationship between parent and child: whereas society

(1) See our study entitled "La famille et l'école en Afrique" (Unesco, Paris, 1978).

as a whole is stratified by the dual criteria of sex and age, the field of education appears to be the only aspect of that society where age-set discrimination disappears: to a certain extent, children and parents draw from a common fund of knowledge bequeathed by tradition, and in daily life the inequalities that are an inevitable part of this gerontocratic structure become blurred, and give way to relationships of mutual help and support.

In their own way, the regions of the world covered by this study have resolved the difficult problem of the relationship between the teacher and the student: in modern societies, the source of knowledge is often difficult to distinguish from the person of the teacher; a varying, but always considerable distance separates the latter from his partner, the learner, and the transmission of knowledge often travels down the same pathway as the authority that is brought to bear on the student. In the African, Indian and Maghrebien worlds, on the other hand, on the basis of their ancestral views and practices, knowledge is a legacy from the past and is therefore quite unconnected with either component of the partnership in education: imparted chiefly through parent-child relationship, this education functions with a minimum amount of psychological trauma on both sides, and at the same time has the greatest desired effect.

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Unesco, 7, place de Fontenoy
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